

THE WINDOW

On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world.

December 2023

Embracing the Prince of Peace **William Scheopner, Elder for Worship and Music**

This fall has been a busy and challenging one in my own life. While it hasn't always been easy or felt natural, I've tried to intentionally lean into Advent and the themes of expectancy that we find there. Advent is one of my favorite times of the year, and this year I've found myself returning to the all-too-familiar words of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

In the midst of life's chaos and uncertainties, the promise of a Savior foretold in Isaiah 9:6, brings a profound sense of peace to me. I love this verse because it doesn't just bring the good news of a Savior, but gives us an idea of what that Savior is like — the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

I'm drawn to the descriptive words in the first three titles in this text - we're told that Jesus is the "Wonderful" Counselor, the "Mighty" God, and the "Everlasting" Father. These descriptive titles share the manner in which Jesus fulfills these roles. He's not just a Counselor (one who defends us), but the Wonderful Counselor who has our best interests at heart. He's not just God, but the Mighty God: strong and powerful and majestic as he protects us and claims our allegiance. He's not just a father, but the Everlasting Father who's unchanging love gives us a place to belong.

Then Isaiah breaks the pattern with the title Prince of Peace. Prince of Peace is perhaps the most comforting title to me in this season, speaking directly to our longing for peace in our busy and divisive world. Jesus came to bring us peace - peace with God, with others, and with our world. In a world marred by unrest and disquiet, our Prince of Peace invites us into a relationship with Him, promising his peace.

I'm drawn to the connection between these titles which we sing about in worship regularly, and the ways that I can learn to acknowledge Jesus as these things in the daily activities of life. This Advent, would you join me in acknowledging and embracing the fullness of Jesus' character, looking to him as our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace?

Spiritual Correspondence

Jana Prescott

Revelation 22:12-21 - "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go forth through the gates into the city. Outside are those who practice magic arts, sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"I, Jesus, have sent you this warning for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright Morning Star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

I warn anyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to the person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes away words from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

He who testifies to these things things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all God's people. Amen.

As we all get prepared for our new year, with Jesus always leading us forward, let's all remember Who is still guiding our way!



November Session Notes

- The Finance Team is requesting continued support from the congregation for 2023 pledged and unpledged giving to be able to close the year at budgeted level.
- Finance will complete and submit a YTD as of 10/21/2023 financial summary for the November Newsletter.
- Boyd Dingman attended the November Session meeting as a guest to express his thoughts regarding outreach and welcoming more individuals into our congregation.
- A Congregational Meeting has been called for December 10, 2023 for the purpose of electing the proposed officers and give a brief update on the Capital Campaign and Strategic Discernment Process.
- Discussion of membership included noting members who have not attended in the last year and having elders sign-up to reach out to them.
- Discussed calling members who have not been seen in attendance sooner.
- The December Session Meeting has been moved up a week to December 12, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

Finances to Close Out 2023

Friends, our ministry here at West Hills Church is possible because of the continued faithful support of our congregation. December traditionally reflects our largest month of giving and allows the church to close the fiscal year in line with its budget. Exiting 2023 on a positive financial note is critical. We have a lot to do in 2024 in restoring our facility and advancing God's kingdom through future visioned initiatives. Achieving these outcomes will require the continuing support from all of us. Together we get to make it happen!

Congregational support for West Hills operating activities through November 2023:

2023 Actual	\$589,913
2023 Budget	\$652,000
2022 PY Actual	\$633,372

December At A Glance

At West Hills our mission statement . . . On a journey with the living Christ; connecting with God, others, and the world, provides us with the framework for how we live our lives. Here are notable activities this month in the life of our church, seeking to connect us to God, others, and the world.

Sundays:

- Crosswalk Kids and Youth check-in at 8:50 a.m. in the lower level welcome area.
- Currently, the DVD study called "Why the Nativity?" is going on at 9 a.m. in the Chapel until December 17.
- Worship at 10 a.m. is livestreamed and in-person. Following worship, join us for fellowship in Geneva Lounge. For those not attending in-person, we welcome you to watch the service by livestream at: whcomaha.org/live

Monday Evenings - Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) for Men, Women, and Children/Teens studying the book of John. Preregistration is required, go to: bsfinternational.org

Tuesday Mornings - Men's Bible study meets at 7:00 a.m. in the large conference room #182. The group studies the scripture passage for the upcoming Sunday sermon.

Wednesday Mornings:

- Women's Bible study at 9:30 a.m. in the Chapel studying a video series where Pastor J.D. Greear walks through the second half of Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

Wednesday Evenings:

- Interactive Worship Space from 6-8 p.m. in the Youth Chapel.
- Men's Bible study at 7 p.m. in the large conference room #182.
- Emerging Adults Small Group from 8-9:15 p.m. for anyone 18-30 years of age. This group meets in the Youth Chapel.

Thursday Mornings - Men and Women Bible study meets in the Chapel at 9:30 a.m.

December 17 - Chili & Caroling following worship service. Meet in Fellowship Hall.

December 20 - Emerging Adult Game Night at Spielbound (3229 Harney St.) at 6:30 p.m.

December 21 - Sloppy Joe Ministry drop-off at the church. Come between 9-4 to the north circle drive and drop your cooked sloppy joe meat and hamburger buns in the bins.

December 24 - Regular worship service at 10 a.m. and Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.

December 31 - Healing Prayers Sunday

Oh Christmas Tree

Peggy Kelley

If you have been at West Hills recently, you have seen that the giant Christmas tree is set up in Geneva Lounge! Our West Hills congregation has enjoyed this tree during the Christmas season since 2005. The only year that it did not make an appearance was in 2020 when the pandemic prevented it from being assembled.

You may not be familiar with the tree's origin. It was during a walk-through of the new addition in 2005 that Pastor George Moore commented to Tim Schaffer that what the church really needed was a large tree in Geneva Lounge. Tim made it happen! Tim and his wife, Leann, and family gifted the 20-foot tree to West Hills. The couple and their children Kristina, Jordan, and Aaron Schaffer, and Tyler and Brittany Patterson have even assisted in past assembly.



Most of us who enjoy the tree each Christmas have no idea the hours of preparation and assembly that are required. For many years, a scaffolding had to be constructed just to enable the workers access to the 17-foot tree frame. This year, a lift greatly simplified that aspect of assembly. There are 20 bins and bags of branches in storage areas in the lower level of West Hills which are brought up to Geneva Lounge. After 11 months of confinement in these storage bins, the branches are flattened and mis-shaped and need considerable love and attention before each is individually inserted into the frame.

John Good, Facility Coordinator, has been an integral part of the assembly of the tree since its inception. He now serves as supervisor and has turned the project over to his son, John Jr., who now has a crew who provide the muscle for the assembly.

What a wonderful gift this tree has been to our West Hills church family! It has brought our congregation much joy as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of our Savior during this holy time of year. Thank you to the many folks that have made this happen over these many years!



tree frame



Assembly Crew



"fluffing" branches



so many branches...



installing 40 lb. star



installing each branch

**“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill
the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)
Judy Nelson, Stephen Leader Deacon**



In his book entitled *Side By Side*, Edward T. Welch wrote, “We all need help and we are all helpers—that’s part of being human. We need help for our souls, especially while going through hardships. We weren’t designed to go through hard things alone.”

Caregiving has been the heart of ministry at West Hills for decades. **Currently 9 Deacons provide leadership in 3 areas of ministry: Caregiving Outreach, Homebound Ministry, and Stephen Ministry.**

Caregiving Outreach Deacons are Sheryl Overby, Ginny Jansen and Marilyn Moore. Throughout the year they have written personal notes to people who have shared prayer needs during Joys & Concerns in Sunday worship. They have organized and supported Meal Trains for members/friends of West Hills who have had hospitalization or illness of family members. Many church members have provided that very tangible support. To welcome new babies, a hand-made baby blanket and baby Bible are presented to the parents. Prayer shawls are also a part of this ministry.

Homebound Ministry Deacons are Deb Johnson, Angie Arner and Barb Wooley. They have focused on serving communion each month to homebound members requesting to be served. (Elders and Deacons also volunteer.) They coordinate the Homebound care given by Partners who make weekly in-person or phone visits with those who are physically unable to attend worship. Many of the Partners completed Stephen Ministry training in the past, but it is not a requirement. The current need is for 8 additional Partners.

The Deacons have been planning for the return (after 4 years) of **Chili and Caroling, December 17**. Please sign up soon and attend this long-standing (pre-Covid) fellowship event immediately following worship that day. Following lunch, groups will go caroling and deliver filled homemade Christmas stockings (Thank you, Linda Springsted) to our Homebound members.

Stephen Leader Deacons Judy Nelson, Dan O’Reilly and Linda Gadwood have all completed Bridge Leader’s Training in the past year and a half (in addition to Stephen Ministry training). They supervise the Stephen Ministry at West Hills. Stephen Ministers meet weekly for about an hour with their care receiver. They provide confidential emotional and spiritual support to individuals experiencing a crisis, grief, loss of job, or other challenging time in life. It is distinctively Christian. A Stephen Minister is also available for confidential personal prayer each week in the Quiet Room following worship. During Healing Services (on 5th Sundays), Stephen Ministers pray with those who request it, paired with an Elder or Pastor.

You are invited to consider becoming a Stephen Minister. We hope to have an adequate number to provide training in 2024! It is life changing. Please reach out to a Stephen Leader Deacon to learn more.

Paul David Tripp has written, “No one gives grace better than a person who is convinced he needs it himself. God makes his invisible grace visible by sending ordinary people to give extraordinary grace to people who need it.”

Life at West Hills Church

Greg Schuchmann

Life at West Hills Church is not just Sunday morning worship. Sunday morning worship at West Hills Church is about community. Spending time together is important, necessary - worshipping through song, prayer, hearing a message as a community. We need each other as we do these things, and we need to feel supported and to get that feeling when we support each other.

These things go on every day of the week as we spend time in Bible study, Bible discussion, and classes. Also important is the way we pray for each other. We may hear during worship services of a "Joy or Concern" shared by someone for someone or for themselves. As we pray, we feel connected and knowing and feeling prayed for connects us.

Then there are those things offered, like a movie - served complete with popcorn, fruit, cheese, crackers, those little sausages wrapped in dough. You cannot get that at a theatre - and all for free.

Help around the church is a silent service. People volunteer to vacuum, decorate, answer phones, the list goes on. And if you drop in, don't be surprised to see someone sitting in one of the pews praying and contemplating.

Stop in downstairs and see the activity of the purest of souls - the daycare and pre-school. The kids will bring a smile to your face. Maybe say hello and encourage the adults and young adults working with these kids.

And the ever-present staff is there. Need something? They may not stop what they are doing, but they will talk with you and take on that one more thing you need help with, or to answer your questions.

All this, Sunday through Saturday is happening under the roof(s) protecting the building which includes the Sanctuary, gymnasium, child care wing, chapel, offices, classrooms, kitchen, storage rooms, utility rooms, conference rooms.

West Hills Church is a busy place - physically and spiritually - inside the building, on the grounds, and throughout the cities with present saints as well as those saints who have moved away, worshipping in other places, and those that have passed on.

West Hills is a special place from the parking lot, on the grounds, and inside the building.



one of the vacuum crew



Bible study group
watching a movie



fixing Christmas
tree lights

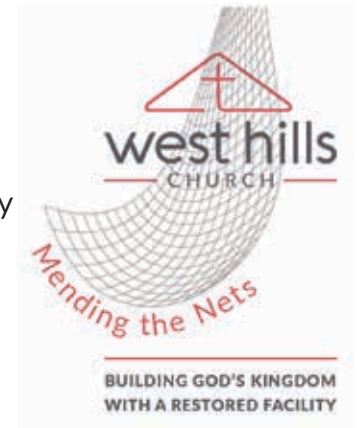
From the Capital Campaign Chairs, Denise Dolezal and Chris Neil . . .

Our West Hills Annual Stewardship and Capital Campaign is off to a good start. As of December 8, we've received **81 responses for the Annual Stewardship, for \$484,153**; this compares to 86 responses for \$513,430 through three weeks last year for 2023. Additionally, we have received **76 pledges for our "Mending the Nets" Capital Campaign for \$816,500**. This represents 74% of our Foundation Goal in pledged dollars, and 54% of our Faith Goal in pledged dollars.

If you have already turned in a pledge card, we want to offer our heartfelt thanks and gratitude. We are truly encouraged by the initial response to the campaign.

If you are still considering your level of support, please take time to look back and look forward. Look back and give the Lord thanks for all His blessings in your life. As you look forward, ask Him to guide you in supporting the Annual Stewardship and Capital Campaign. Your gift is so important, whatever the amount. Remember, just as we are one body in Christ Jesus, let us be one body united in prayer and action.

As we continue in the Advent and Christmas season, we are deeply thankful that you are a part of West Hills Church. May God continue to guide us as we serve Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength.



Make a joyful noise and put a smile on a face as we fa-la-la-la-la together on December 17 following worship!

Bible Quiz compiled by Gloria Zinn

1. Which of the 4 gospels relate the story of Jesus' birth? A) John and Luke B) Matthew and Luke C) Mark and John D) Matthew and Mark
2. What prophet in the OT said the Messiah would be born of a virgin? A) Isaiah B) Jeremiah C) Micah D) Hosea
3. What question did Mary ask the angel Gabriel? A) Why was I chosen B) Does Joseph know C) How can this be D) What do I do now
4. Who did Mary go to a few days after Gabriel's news? A) Joseph B) her rabbi C) her mother D) a relative
5. Which OT prophet predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem? A) Micah B) Daniel C) Isaiah D) Jeremiah
6. Which of the following either lived, were born, or were buried in Bethlehem? A) Rachel B) Ruth and Naomi C) David D) Jacob
7. Why was Bethlehem so crowded when Mary and Joseph arrived? A) Jewish religious holiday B) census requirement C) had a very large population D) a caravan of Egyptians had arrived

8. Who named Jesus? A) Gabriel B) Mary C) God D) Joseph

9. Who were Jesus' first visitors? A) Wise Men B) Angels C) Innkeeper and his wife D) Shepherds

10. Once they reached Jerusalem how did the Wise Men find Jesus? A) They asked King Herod B) They asked the Jewish religious leaders C) The star led them D) They were told by an angel where to find Jesus

11. After Jesus was born where was Joseph told in a dream to take Jesus and Mary? A) Egypt B) Jerusalem C) Nazareth D) Bethany

12. Who were the two people in the temple when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem for the purification rites? A) Zechariah and Elizabeth B) Anna and Penuel C) John and Simeon D) Anna and Simeon

**Answers are on the back page.



First Sunday of Advent - Hanging of the Green







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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



DECEMBER

1-Candy Glasgow
5-Wayne Moore
9-Joanne Topolski
Brian Myers
11-Branden O'Hare
15-Eddie Nelson
16-Bill Jansen
Tom Gill
17-Jason Scheopner

19-Kaylee Boyd
Julie Burgess
20-Judy Pagel
Terry Sedivy
22-Michael Backer
Randy Hess
28-Bev Eckhoff
29-John Nelson
Mark Zimmerman

*The complete list of
January birthdays will be
in the January newsletter.*

JANUARY

3-Nancy Chesire
5-Greg Kuhn
6-Rick Westcott
13-Steve Burgess
Les Peterson
14-Grant Thomas