

WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)



THE SACRIFICE (TOP) AND ANNUNCIATION (BELOW) OF ISAAC

TURKEY CA 1386

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

A SERVICE OF WORD

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023 10:30 AM

Grace Notes

Welcome to WHPC! If you are visiting us today, we are so glad you joined us for worship. If you have not already, please take a moment to record your contact information on the visitor card you will find in the pew and drop it in the offering box or hand it to a greeter at the door. We are always glad to share the great things happening at WHPC!

If you are looking for a new church home and would like to join in fellowship with Westover Hills, please join us in the Parlor (outside the sanctuary doors) and we will gladly share more about life at WHPC or, if you are ready, receive you into membership.

Childcare is available in the nursery. Please check with a greeter.

WE GATHER AT GOD'S INVITATION

WELCOME & OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP

Dr. Robert Lowry, Pastor

PRELUDE

+CALL TO WORSHIP

Sahr Lebbe, Liturgist

As Abraham welcomed the strangers

So God welcomes us.

God greets us with joy

and says, "rest here for awhile."

God brings out water to wash our dusty feet.

God prepares a meal to nourish our weary spirits.

So let us receive the gracious hospitality of our God.

Let us rest in this holy place

where there is shade and water, food and laughter.

+OPENING PRAYER

God of our fathers and mothers—

of all the generations who have come before us—holy is Your name.

We gather in Your presence with praise and thanksgiving

for the faithful love You have shown toward Your people,

for the many blessings You have given to us.

Your promises are eternal, and they are backed by the honour of Your name.

Thank you for Your faithful presence among us,

even when we are not fully aware of it.

Continue to reveal Yourself to us.

Open our eyes to see You here among us; open our ears to hear Your Word.

For surely, You are with us in this place.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

+SONG OF PRAISE

"To Abraham and Sarah"

LLANFYLLIN

1 To A - bra - ham and Sa - rah the call of God was clear:
2 From A - bra - ham and Sa - rah a - rose a pil - grim race,
3 We of this gen - er - a - tion on whom God's hand is laid

"Go forth and I will show you a coun - try rich and fair.
de - pen - dent for their jour - ney on God's a - bun - dant grace;
can jour - ney to the fu - ture se - cure and un - a - fraid,

Grace Notes

You need not fear the jour - ney, for I have pledged my word
and in their heart was writ - ten by God this sav - ing word,
re - joic - ing in God's good - ness and trust - ing in this word,

that you shall be my peo - ple and I will be your God."
"That you shall be my peo - ple and I will be your God."
"That you shall be my peo - ple and I will be your God."

CALL TO CONFESSION

Brothers and sisters, nothing we can say or do can ever separate us from God's mercy and love. The gifts of God are eternal and will never be withdrawn. God's ultimate desire and purpose is not to punish but to forgive. So together we may pray with hope, not fear. Let us pray together.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Awesome God,
when we catch sight of the totality of your claim on our lives,
our believing wavers.**

**When we hear the absurdity of your unbreakable covenant with us;
like Sarai and Abram, we laugh.**

**When we face the foolish wisdom of the looming cross;
like Peter, we suggest an alternative.**

**Meet us in our disbelieving, loving God,
move us gently into the deep waters of faith.**

Silence is kept.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

...in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

+SUNG RESPONSE

Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

A E Bm E A D E A

Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

The word "awesome" has lost some of its meaning in modern English. It has come to mean "cool" or "great." The historic meaning of the word, and what it implies when referring to God, is something much more. It means to be filled with "awe." Awe means "reverential respect" or "inspired."

To call God "awesome" is to say that we are filled with inspiration about and toward God.

Grace Notes

The nature of the Hebrew Bible is to recall history without always smoothing out all the disjointed sections that occur when disparate oral traditions were brought together. Some scholars argue that this is intentional as a literary device to drive home a larger theme concerning the nature and character of God.

The completed form of the Genesis text is the story of a single childless couple who are promised a son. By the end of the book of Genesis, sixty-six persons belong to this lineage. This is enough to ensure both durability and influence.

+THE PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ which passes all understanding be with you all.

And also with you.

WE PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."

Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he said.

Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."

But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

Grace Notes

A funny scene unfolds at the end of the story of the Annunciation of Isaac. Sarah, unable to believe what she hears, laughs. She laughs in the face of the messengers of God. Then, when her laughter is pointed out, she denies having laughed to which the messengers reply, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

The Hebrew in this place is less formal than the above translation implies. The messenger of God looks at Sarah, likely with disbelief, and says, “Um, yeah ya did!” Sarah’s expression must have been something like that of a child caught with a hand in the cookie jar trying to deny they were reaching for a cookie!

The Lord was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the Lord carried out just what he had promised her. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac. Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old just as God had commanded him. Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. Sarah said, “God has given me laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me.” She said, “Who could have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse sons? But now I’ve given birth to a son when he was old!”

SERMON

“Genuinely Surprised”

Dr. Lowry

WE RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD

†HYMN OF RESPONSE #488

“The God of Abraham Praise”

LEONI

†AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostles’ Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.**

**The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

BLESSING OF THE PRAYER SHAWLS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Grace Notes

Christians often forget that we can learn a great deal about the faith from the Hebrew scriptures. This text draws from a variety of passages that call attention to God's faithfulness. Far from being the "old" or former testament of God's work in the world, the Hebrew Bible is part of the living word of God.

If you are looking for a new church home or would like to learn more about Westover Hills, please let an usher, greeter, or Dr. Lowry know. We would love to tell you more about life at WHPC!

WE DEPART IN GOD'S NAME

+PARTING HYMN

"O God Who Gives Us Life and Breath"

NOEL

1 O God, who gives us life and breath, who shapes us in the womb,
2 O God, who calls your peo-ple out to ven-ture and to dare,
3 O God of cov - e - nant and law, re - vealed in cloud and flame,

who guards our lives from birth to death, then leads us from the tomb:
to plumb the bleak a - byss of doubt and find you e - ven there:
your might - y deeds e - voke our awe; we dare not speak your name.

de - liv - er us from fears that kill the life we have from you.
when we de - spair in wan - der - ing through wastes of emp - ty lies,
Yet we by faith are drawn to you and will your peo - ple prove,

Help us to know your Spir - it still is mak - ing all things new.
re - fresh us with the liv - ing spring of hope that nev - er dies.
as on our hearts you write a - new the cov - e - nant of love.

+CHARGE & BENEEDICTION

+POSTLUDE

WORSHIP NOTES

WORSHIP LEADERS TODAY are Dr. Robert Lowry, Music Director David Austin, Liturgist Sahr Lebbie, and the Westover Hills Chancel Choir.

THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

MIDWEEK MANNA has returned! Manna takes place every Wednesday at 12:05 in the New Chapel and via Zoom. Midweek Manna will be focusing on the Parables of Jesus this fall. All are invited whether you have been to a class or not. See CareLine for the Zoom link.

YOGA has returned and takes place every Thursday at 10am in the New Chapel. Yoga is for everyone, whether you are an expert or you have no experience. All you need to bring is a yoga mat and an open mind.

ADULT CLASSES SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9 Adult Classes in September: Peacemaking

Be part of a different kind of conversation— one that welcomes every perspective in a search for the deeper truths that unite us. The theme this month is Peacemaking; the adult class will consider many facets of peacemaking in September. This is the month when Westover Hills joins a host of organizations throughout Arkansas who observe the UN International Day of Peace and Arkansas Peace Week (September 17-24). Class meets in the New Chapel and by Zoom.

- September 24– Insights from the PCUSA Coalition for Gun Violence Prevention
- October 1– Responsible Gun Ownership– conversation with WHPC folks who own guns

2ND WEDNESDAY SPIRITUALITY GROUP Please join us for our Second Wednesday Spirituality Group every second Wednesday of the month. This group meets in the New Chapel and if you need directions you may contact H.K Stewart for more information or directions. The group will meet this Wednesday at 5:45pm in the New Chapel.

FIRST AND THIRD MONDAY BOOK GROUP AT SECOND PRES Pastor Robert will be leading this multi-church reading group during the fall. The book for fall is “Eat This Book: The Art of Spiritual Reading,” by Eugene Peterson. The book group meets in the Second Hall at 2nd Presbyterian at 9:30 on the first and third Monday of each month starting next Monday, September 18. All are welcome, so come join us for a great book and even better discussions.

STEW POT CLOTHES CLOSET It is HOT! And the Clothes Closet has been having more and more folks in need. WE have had to increase the number of hours we are open. Donations have begun to slow down, so we are asking for the following items:

- Ball caps
- Men’s athletic shoes
- Men’s jeans and docker type pants waist size 30-36
- Travel size toothpaste, shampoo, lotion, soap and backpacks

There is a donation box in the office as well as in the Narthex of the Sanctuary. We do appreciate all that you do for the Clothes Closet!

STEW POT NEEDS YOUR HELP Barbara Polite (head of the clothes closet for Stewpot) is not able to help out at the moment. We need volunteers on Tuesdays 9:00-11:00 and on Thursdays from 9:00-1:00. Please contact Nancy Sherman Carter if you are able to help out; her email is nesherman57@yahoo.com.

PEACE WEEK activities start September 17 and end September 23rd with an announcement and celebration of school age winners of an art and essay contest. On Monday September 18th at 6pm a free meal will be offered at the Madina Mosque on Kanis Road. This event provides an opportunity to hear from leaders of the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths. Westover Hills church hosted this event last year and we are continuing our commitment to this peace making activity. This is a wonderful opportunity to interact with friends and to grow in appreciation for each other’s faith.

THE SID MCCOLLUM FARMER’S MARKET The annual Farmer’s Market has returned. The Farmer’s Market is open every Tuesday from 3:30-6:00pm, so come and check out the local produce and other items from local vendors. If you have any questions you may contact Bob Quinn.

PLEASE SEND NEWS FOR CARELINE to office.westoverhills@gmail.com. If you would like to receive the twice-weekly church e-newsletter (CareLine), please fill out a contact card from a pew rack, add 'CareLine request' and drop the card in an offering box.

CALENDAR UPDATES AND SESSION DOCUMENTS should be sent to the office and copied to Candice Misenheimer.

PRAYER LIST UPDATE If you or a loved one would like to be on the prayer list, please contact the church office at office.westoverhills@gmail.com. The name will remain on the prayer list until the office is notified to remove it or it will be removed at the beginning of a new quarter. The prayer list has been updated, so be sure to email the office if you or a loved one

PASTORAL CARE

PLEASE INCLUDE IN YOUR PRAYERS Debbie Waltermire (friend of Betty Deere; diagnosed with breast cancer); Barbara Polite (manager of Stewpot Clothes Closet; neurological issues); Jason Chrisman (son of Mary Chrisman); Barbara Monroe and her husband Duke who has been her caretaker (Barbara has moved into in home hospice); Douglas Ponce (director of El Zocalo; his mother is hospitalized in El Salvador); The Garcia family (friends of Sydney; recent loss of daughter/sister and father is recovering in the hospital from 2 strokes); Mary Ellen Holder; Jane Estes (recovery from long haul Covid, and toxic mold treatment and remediation of their home); Vivianna McAtee; Jonathon Simpson (scheduled for kidney transplant September 19th); Amber Simpson (donating her kidney to her brother Jonathon); Connie James (mother of Jonathon and Amber; Connie donated her kidney to Jonathon 27 years ago); Amy Crawford (late-stage liver cancer); Jim Miller (broken ankle; at home); Lila Quinn; Deran Abernathy (son-in-law of former member Judy Huffman; stage 4 lung cancer); Rev. Carol Ann Blow (health issues); Johnny Rhodes; Anna Grace Clark (brain cancer); Reverend Doug Kanney (heart issues); Those affected by wildfires in the United States; Preschool staff, children and parents; Church staff: Pastor Robert Lowry, Rev. Michael Gallup, Ulysses, Shawn, Tammy, David and Sydney.

DEACONS FOR SEPTEMBER are Charlotte Frith and Kay McCollum

CALENDAR

The church calendar is available on the website

(scan QR code or visit www.westoverhills.org to be directed to our website)

WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

6400 RICHARD B HARDIE DRIVE, LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207

