



“William’s Wanderings”

“...but the angel reassured them: ‘Don’t be afraid!’ he said. ‘I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David.”

-Luke 2:10-11

Do you remember the sound of your baby’s cry? When our children were newly born, every cry set off **alarm bells**. There were different sounds to each cry, different needs brought forth a different pitch. Nonetheless, if the sound came in the middle of the night, the **cry** caused you to sit up in a panic. Of course, you got out of bed, tended to the need, and prayed that the child would, now that he/she was satisfied, would cease the **five-alarm** sound.

Mo and my sons are now grown. Zachary, our eldest son, has three children of his own who gave him and his wife, Melissa, those infant sounds, to be sure. I can’t say that I miss the cry of my sons from those days gone by...but now I appreciate them. **I appreciate a baby crying at midnight!**

Yes, I have continued to hear the sounds, especially when the church has gathered together for a candlelight service on **Christmas Eve**. I can’t think of a service that was not interrupted by the sound of a baby crying, or a small child expressing his/her displeasure in the sacred moment. More than a few parents have been mortified, sitting among 300 people, all looking around, seeking to discover from whence the cry came.

In the **dark of night**, angels proclaimed the **Light of the world**. A newborn Baby’s cry announced the holiest flesh of the world. I want you to consider this for a moment, if you will: **Our most intimate connection to God, our Creator, is through the Incarnation of Jesus**. A woman, barely a teenager, with the same emotions that any woman today would have, gave birth to our Savior, God coming to dwell in our neighborhoods...our homes...our hearts. The birth of the **Christ Child** in Bethlehem is **everything we need** to know about God’s unconditional, unbounded love for humanity.

On **Christmas Eve**, I pray that we will gather at **5:00 p.m.** to welcome the hope of God’s Son dwelling among us. But you know He hardly arrives in earthly privilege or wealth. Instead, His parents, finding **“no room for them in the inn,”** must deliver their Baby outdoors in a field near shepherds, in a stable used to house animals, swaddled in a feeding trough, making for a **scene** that is **wrapped in mystery** juxtaposed with the glorious song of the heavenly hosts above.

I have often wondered if God placed this Child in lowly circumstances to reaffirm the goodness of all of God’s creation. And while we may well celebrate Christmas with our families gathered around the tree with gifts of our labor to share, and the joy of a festive meal around the table, **it is this humble Birth-this crying Baby, this blazing moment-that is the point of it all.**

I pray that you and your family will join with me throughout the holiday season as we make our way to **Christmas Eve**. And that you will, even in the midst of your holiday celebration, make time to join with us at **5:00 on Christmas Eve for our Candlelight and Communion Service.**

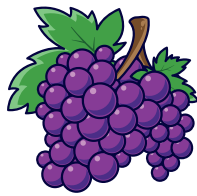
And from our house to yours: **Mo and I** wish you a most blessed and **Happy Christmas**. May you feel the joy of love as it surrounds you and know that this Baby was born for you.

Still in His Peace,
William



Note: **Mo and I** will be leaving Christmas Day to be with family. We will return on **the 28th** so that I will be here on Sunday, 29 December, for morning worship.

First Fruits of Worship



by Bruce Smith
Director of Music Ministries

Christmas Carol Story: “Hark The Herald Angels Sing”

“Christ by highest heaven adored, Christ the everlasting Lord”

This great Christmas carol of the church actually came to us in its recognizable form from two divergent paths, where the combination of lyrics and melody should never have met. The lyrics came first from the great and prolific hymn composer, Charles Wesley. In the text, Wesley connected the cosmic chorus and the man’s hope for peace on earth. While most Christmas carol texts refer specifically to the prophets foretelling Christ’s coming, the annunciation to Mary, and the birth story of Jesus, Wesley chose to address the theology of Christ’s “being” on earth. Instead of the standard Christmas carol phrase “good will toward men”, Wesley used the phrase “God and sinner reconciled”– pointing to the “purpose of Christ’s being” as opposed to the birth story.

There is just so much more John 1 and 2 in this carol than Luke 1 and 2. In John 1, we see the connected references to “light and life” that Wesley chose for this hymn

“in him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5

“Hail the heav’nly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings, Ris’n with healing in His wings.” – vs 3

In this great carol is the expression of just who Christ is to us and for us. There is very little focus on the baby in the manger, but a lot of focus on Christ the “incarnate deity”, “the everlasting Lord” and “our Emmanuel”. This text was written by Wesley within a year of Charles’ conversion, so it’s understandable that he writes this Christmas based hymn speaking to the total theology of Christ’s coming and birth. But wraps it in the angelic praise song of heaven.

“Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’angelic host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!” – vs 1

Now onto those two divergent paths for music and text. The music for this great carol was composed by the famous German composer Felix Mendelssohn almost 100 years after the text. Mendelssohn was Jew and never intended for any of his compositions to be used for any purpose other than secular. As well, Wesley had requested that “Hark The Herald Angels Sing” be accompanied by only slow and solemn religious music. The triumphant strains of Mendelssohn’s tune (originally written as a secular piece to commemorate the invention of the printing press) hardly qualifies as slow, solemn music.

But it was the 19th century organist, Dr. William H. Cummings, put these two entities together to form this life changing classic Christmas hymn. As we sing this carol during Advent and Christmastide, may we be encouraged to give “glory to the newborn King!”

“to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” John 1:12-13

Longtime member of Westover UMC family, Margaret Carter, went to her eternal home on November 16. Her memorial service Saturday, December 14 at 1:00 PM in the church sanctuary. Reception to follow in the fellowship hall. The link to her obituary is: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/raleigh-nc/margaret-carter-12084889>

Sunday school

The adult Sunday School class continues their study of 1 and 2 Peter. We meet at 10:00 AM on Sunday mornings, in the Education building. There is a place for you in our class!

Craft Circle

December craft circle will be a painted Christmas design on fabric. We will then frame it. Barbara Smith will be providing supplies, so if you are planning to participate, please RSVP to Barbara so that she can make sure we have enough supplies. Please bring a glue gun if you have one.

Movie night

On December 13 at 7:00 PM, we'll travel to the North Pole, at least in the movies. This month's movie is *Polar Express*. Please join us in the fellowship hall for fun, fellowship, snacks and maybe a door prize.

Mark your calendar

Dec 1 - Decorate church for advent 10:00 AM
Dec 7 - Craft Circle 10:00 AM
Dec 7 - UWF lunch 12:00 PM
Dec 7 - United Women of Faith 12:30 PM
Dec 7 - Children's Christmas party 1:30-3:00 PM
Dec 13 - Movie night 7:00 PM
Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Service 5:00 PM

Flood buckets

There was a great afternoon of fun and fellowship assembling flood buckets for UMCOR. What a blessing that Westover was able to deliver 43 buckets to help those in need! Thank you to all who helped!



Thank you, Gateway

Have you been in the Education building lately? Have you noticed you can see so much better? Much thanks to Gateway for installing new LED overhead lights throughout the first floor of the building. We are thankful.



Children's Christmas party

Our annual Christmas party for children is Saturday, December 7, 1:30-3:00 PM.

Please join us for crafts, cookie decorating, refreshments and special entertainment by Crosswaves. **If you are willing to bake sugar cookies for us, please contact Sharron Gibson.**

Happy December Birthdays to:

- 1 Deborah Cox
- 2 Mark Brooks
- 2 Beth Tudor Hayes
- 4 Richard Rambeaut
- 5 Jeffery Daniel
- 5 Tayo Adebiyi
- 6 Adrienne Watkins
- 7 Jimmy Coggins
- 8 Ashley Fisher Millhiser
- 9 Tommy Highsmith
- 10 Toyin Adebiyi
- 10 Janice Carter
- 16 Ann Renegar
- 16 Josh Johnson
- 16 Robert McGee
- 20 Trey Watkins
- 22 Sharron Gibson
- 27 Ayen Ksor
- 27 Alex Arellanes Ksor
- 29 Dona Daniels
- 31 Tyler Watkins

Happy Birthday



WESTOVER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH INVITES YOU!



Christmas Eve service- All are welcome!
Service is in the sanctuary, Dec 24 at 5:00 PM.



**Movie night in the Fellowship Hall (downstairs beneath
the sanctuary) on Friday, Dec 13, 7:00 PM.
This month's movie is *Polar Express*.**



Children's Christmas Party

**Fellowship Hall
Saturday, Dec 7
1:30-3:00 PM**

You are always welcome at our
9:00 AM (in Fellowship Hall) or 11:00
AM (in sanctuary) worship service!

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