

Another Word December 14, 2021

To our friends and family of First Christian Church

As Christmas Day comes closer and closer, don't forget to let the spirit of Christmas bring you peace, gladness, hope, and fill your heart with joy!

We are planning a special Christmas Eve service, December 24th, at 7 pm. If you need a ride that evening, please call the church office. We have a few who have volunteered to help.

I will be taking about half of our donations to The Lord's Pantry this Tuesday. There is still time to bring in a few more items. Your response is greatly appreciated by Pastor Mike and his staff.

Our Old Testament reading is Isaiah 9:1-3a, 6-7. Our serving Elder is Matt Henderson. Our New Testament reading will be Luke 1: 57-80, and Matthew 1:18-25 read by Bill Freytag. My message is, "What John becomes, and who Joseph is."

The candle of Love, our fourth candle will be lit by Brendan, Marlee, and Emersyn Henderson.

As we enter into prayer, please lift up Brian, Lana, Karen, Stu, Chase, and John. Also, please remember all the people whose lives have been changed by the outbreak of tornadoes. Let us go to God in prayer;

O most Holy God, we lift up our voices to praise Your name, and celebrate Your great works. Accept our thanks for the plans You have

made for us. We cherish the gifts of peace, comfort, and joy that You have blessed us with. It is a challenge to live in Your will but it is a blessing and our desire to do so. And we are indeed humbled that You care and love us so. Hear the names that are in our hearts that need Your care and mercy..... May we always look out for our neighbor's welfare, and place others needs before ourselves. In Jesus' most Holy Name we pray, Amen.

The third candle of Advent is the candle of "Joy." Joy is a feeling we get when something good happens, or something we have always wanted is suddenly available. I remember the feeling of joy we had when the realtor called and said, "we got the house." However, I also remember how joy took a back seat when one of the water lines in the basement broke! Joy is a glad feeling; a feeling of happiness that best expresses itself with our state of mind and the condition of our soul. And quite often, when life becomes a burden, joy unexpectedly appears and lifts us to gladness. To me, music is a wonderful gift of joy.

Up until the early 1700's, British churches, especially the Church of Scotland sang only Psalms from the Bible. Words were translated, arranged in a form of rhyming poetry, and then set to music. It was a very strict and serious method, never to be altered.

Along comes a young man from Southampton. He became dissatisfied with the quality of the music, as well as the strict limitations that were set in place. In his efforts to write new expressive music, he transformed English hymns into the music we now know and love. One thing he did not neglect however, were the Psalms. In his hymn writing, he paraphrased and combined different verses to be able to express

faith through the “eyes of the New Testament.” He was soundly criticized, not unlike some of our contemporary Christian Hymn writers of today, but eventually his beautiful expressive writing became accepted and much loved.

In 1719, Isaac Watts penned a complete book of new hymns, including the most beloved, “Joy to the World.” The words are based on Psalm 98, especially verses 4 and 8-9. “Shout joyfully all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises,” and “Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy before the Lord, for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity.” (NASB)

As for the melody that we’ve come to love; it is a combination of 2 musical phrases taken from Handel’s *Messiah*, “Lift up your heads,” and “Comfort Ye.” And if you pay close attention, the first 3 stanzas are descending notes that exclaim, “The Lord has come.” (down to us) While the next 3 stanzas are ascending notes that say, “Let earth receive her King.” (we rise up to greet Him)

One last note. Watts didn’t write this as a Christmas carol, but as a hymn to be sung all year long. It is meant to remind us that we should shout for joy, because the Messiah has come to redeem us. I dare you to try and read the words without singing the melody in your head!

“Joy to the World”

Isaac Watts 1719

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room, and Heaven and nature sing,
and Heaven and nature sing, and Heaven and Heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love,
and wonders of His love, and wonders and wonders of His love.

In His Joy,

Rich