

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by:
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Brooks McKelroy

#800 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
#480 Blessed Assurance

Scripture Reading by: Parker Balch
Communion Devotional by: Don Taylor

#902 Nothing But the Blood of Jesus
Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#589 Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
Sermon: “People of the Nativity: The Shepherds”
Luke 2:8-20

#313 The Old Rugged Cross
#535 The Glory-Land Way
Closing Prayer by: Craig Girard

Our Small Groups will meet tonight.
Don Taylor’s group will meet
at the building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Dec. 17, 2023

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

Joy to the World

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!
Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who dwell in it!
Let the rivers clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together
before the Lord, for he comes
to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

- Psalm 98

Isaac Watts is considered the father of English hymnody, almost singlehandedly moving us from merely chanting the Psalms to singing the gospel songs we know today. John Calvin, one of the leaders of the Reformation, was extremely influential in his view that all hymns should be direct quotations from the Scriptures rather than original compositions. Watts changed that, while still writing songs that were completely saturated in Biblical thought and language.

Watts was born in Southampton to a family of Congregational Dissenters from the Church of England. His family was, thus, subject to persecution from the established church; in fact, his father was in prison at his birth. But Watts obviously was reared in a deeply religious home.

In addition, he had a keen intellect. By the age of five, he was learning Latin; at nine, he added Greek; by the time he was 13, he had learned French and Hebrew, too. Beyond his work in languages, he studied philosophy and theology.

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

May Belle Sibley is in at home after being in the hospital.

Gayle Coleman was in the hospital last week.

Leo Hoffpauier was in the hospital last week.

Jerry Mallernee had surgery last week.

Continued Prayers

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stiflemire, Donna Wilson, Patricia Prater, Edna Semien, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Kelly McCain, Wayne Noonkester

Shut Ins

(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meeting Monday, Dec. 18th at 5:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Thursday, Dec. 21st at 8:00 a.m.

Gift Bags

We will be delivering our goodie bags as a group and caroling on Sunday, December 17. This is intended for all youth and for any adults who would like to participate. Please meet at the church building at 5 pm.

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique, Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

At that time, English hymns were dreary translations from the Psalms, first read by a deacon and then repeated by the congregation. Consider an example typical of the songs Watts was subjected to in his youth:

Ye monsters of the bubbling deep,
Your Master's praises spout;
Up from the sand ye docclings peep,
And wag your tails about.

Not surprisingly, someone with his gifts became dissatisfied by these songs. One Sunday after returning from a service with this type of singing – while still just a teenager – Watts complained to his father about the quality of their hymns. His father responded, “Well then, why don’t you write something better?”

So he did. He wrote some 750 songs by the end of his life, among them such enduring classics as “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?” and “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” We probably think of those as eloquent, magisterial hymns today, but they were not universally appreciated then. Because of his departure from the Psalms and, at times, deeply personal lyrics – he speaks of himself (even in those two titles), his sin, his gratitude – Watts was considered quite radical (an excellent reminder that all old songs were once new songs, viewed with suspicion; we might think of that when we are introduced to new songs or when trying to cast aside the old ones, for that matter). But his compositions have endured, not only because of their beauty, but because they are bursting at the seams with Scripture.

That is certainly the case with “Joy to the World,” the most popular Christmas hymn in North America. Watts wrote this for his 1719 hymnal, *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and Applied to the Christian State and Worship*. His purpose was to take the Psalms and read them with the eye of faith from the perspective of a Christian, paraphrasing all but a dozen of the 150 Psalms. This one is from **Psalms 98**, now read with a Christological interpretation: the source of joy is the coming of the king, who will rule over the nations.

We owe a great debt to Isaac Watts for his contribution to congregational singing. As he put it in the preface to another of his hymnals, “While we sing the praises of God in His Church, we are employed in that part of worship which of all others is the nearest akin to heaven, and ‘tis pity that this of all others should be performed worst upon earth.” May we all take our worship in song as seriously as Watts did. And may we all make a joyful noise to the Lord in response.

Bryant Perkins

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

is the weekly bulletin of the Liberty Church of Christ 3201 North Main, Liberty Texas 77575

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