

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Ken Coleman
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#1018 Joy to the World
#615 He Keeps Me Singing

Scripture Reading by: Matthew Girard
Communion Devotional by: Bobby Rader

#382 Why Did My Savior Come to Earth?
Lord’s Supper and Contribution

#678 More About Jesus
Sermon by Daniel Balch: 3 Gifts
1 Peter 3:21

#947 Jesus Is Tenderly Calling
#549 There Is Sunshine In My Soul
Closing Prayer by: River Lucy

Our Small Groups will not meet tonight.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

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

Dec. 24, 2023

“*Stand Firm in...Liberty*”

Galatians 5:1

Noel

Most of you are probably at least somewhat familiar with J. R. R. Tolkien. He was a philologist by training, a professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford. But he is best known today as a writer, particularly for his epic works of fantasy, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Tolkien was famously a devout Catholic. His religious beliefs clearly influenced a number of his works in terms of their worldview, though he did not write much that was explicitly Christian. The poem printed below, *Noel*, is an exception. If you have ever read either of the two books named above, you know Tolkien wove numerous songs and poems into the narrative; it is not surprising, then, that he wrote standalone poetry as well. What is, perhaps, surprising is that this poem was lost for decades, only rediscovered by a couple of scholars in 2013.

In the poem, Tolkien describes the world before and after the birth of Christ. Pay attention to the imagery: prior to his coming, the world is bleak and dark. But then, the night is pierced by a bright light; Mary bursts forth in song, and the bells of Heaven itself ring out. It is a vivid picture that I encourage all of us to meditate on. *Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Cor 9:15)*

*Grim was the world and grey last night:
The moon and stars were fled,
The hall was dark without song or light,
The fires were fallen dead.
The wind in the trees was like to the sea,
And over the mountains' teeth
It whistled bitter-cold and free,
As a sword leapt from its sheath.*

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Ricky Lucas has been diagnosed with MS.

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

Our Missionaries

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

Upcoming Activities

No Elders, Minister meeting this week.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Jan. 2nd at 8:00 a.m.

Food Bank

We served 118 families on Thursday, Dec. 21st at our food bank. That equals to 329 individuals. We had 18 volunteers.

<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	

*The lord of snows upreared his head;
His mantle long and pale
Upon the bitter blast was spread
And hung o'er hill and dale.
The world was blind,
the boughs were bent,
All ways and paths were wild:
Then the veil of cloud apart was rent,
And here was born a Child.*

*The ancient dome of heaven sheer
Was pricked with distant light;
A star came shining white and clear
Alone above the night.
In the dale of dark in that hour of birth
One voice on a sudden sang:
Then all the bells in Heaven and Earth
Together at midnight rang.*

*Mary sang in this world below:
They heard her song arise
O'er mist and over mountain snow
To the walls of Paradise,
And the tongue of many bells was stirred
in Heaven's towers to ring
When the voice of mortal maid was heard,
That was mother of Heaven's King.*

*Glad is the world and fair this night
With stars about its head,
And the hall is filled with laughter and light,
And fires are burning red.
The bells of Paradise now ring
With bells of Christendom,
And Gloria, Gloria we will sing
That God on earth is come.*

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

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