

Pastor's Update, Saturday, March 27, 2021

Happy Saturday WFMC Family!

[Link to Morning Worship Live-stream \(becomes live at 8:20a\)](#)

Morning Worship: We continue with our “normal for now” Sunday schedule, with in-person worship gatherings at 8:30a and 11:00a, and Sunday school, and Youth and Adult Bible Fellowships at 9:45a. Inside the buildings on the church campus, please wear masks when you're within six feet of others and while singing.

A Special “Welcome Back” to the increasing number who have been vaccinated and are now comfortable returning to in-person worship.

At-Home Worshippers will find a copy of the worship folder and songs attached / below. Communion Elements, for Maundy Thursday and for Easter Sunday will be available in the church foyer all week, 8:30a to 1:00p.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday worship services are scheduled for 7:00p next Thursday and Friday. Services will also be live-streamed – click here for those links: [Maundy Thursday](#) [Good Friday](#)

Two New Weekly Newsletters Now Available Electronically: The first from Free Methodist Communications - [Light and Life Weekly Magazine](#) and second, a [Weekly Financial Newsletter From the Free Methodist Foundation](#).

An Update From the Angelos – [Missionaries to Portugal is available by clicking here.](#)

The Importance of Spiritual Family Attached / below is a very good, short article on the importance of spiritual family, especially to Christian singles, and especially to those who have struggled with sexual identity. It is part of a larger book, which I'd also recommend, by Christopher Yuan, entitled, “Holy Sexuality and the Gospel.” Dr. Yuan writes from the perspective of one who has struggled with those very things. He has taught Bible for over ten years at Moody Bible Institute and recently spoke at both Asbury University and Asbury Seminary.

Another Insightful Article: *Politics is Seeping into Our Daily Life and Ruining Everything:* *Americans are choosing jobs, brands, and friends for partisan reasons, say researchers.* Certainly, Christians are responsible to engage in their political world. At the same time, I found this piece attached / below insightful and rather convicting, especially since this is not written from a Christian perspective.

And Finally, In The Interest Of Keeping Our Senses of Humor –



Peace and Blessings, Sisters and Brothers,

Pastor Daryl

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS—WEEK OF MARCH 28, 2021

TODAY

8:00a Pre- Service Prayer—B106
8:30a Morning Worship I—Sanctuary & B200-B201 Overflow
Nursery—Building B Preschool Wing
9:40a Children's Sunday School, Youth and Adult Bible Fellowships
Nursery—Building B Preschool Wing
11:00a Morning Worship II—Sanctuary & B200-B201 Overflow
Nursery—Building B Preschool Wing children under 4 years
NO Youth Handbell Choir (Resumes April 11)

MONDAY

10:00a Public School Spring break begins
Ladies' Bible Study via Zoom;
(contact Peggy Welch for Zoom link / 859-338-4378)

TUESDAY

6:30a Men's Prayer Meeting—A200
8:00a Ladies' Prayer Meeting—A200
9:30a Ladies Bible Study (Moore & Cook)—B203
6:30p Blessings Handbell Choir— Sanctuary
7:00p Men's Bible Study
7:00p Men's Basketball

WEDNESDAY

4:50 p.m. Bible Quizzing—B100s
No Wednesday Evening Activities

THURSDAY

12:00n TOPS—A200
7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Worship Service—Sanctuary
Nursery/Childcare—Building B Preschool Wing

FRIDAY

No Youth Prayer Breakfast
No Virtual Café
10:00a-noon Moms Pray & Play-Building C
12:00 noon Church office closes
7:00 p.m. Good Friday Worship Service—Sanctuary
Nursery/Childcare—Building B Preschool Wing



SATURDAY

IN THESE STRANGE DAYS, we are worshipping in different ways, including not using common offering plates or communion elements. We're not greeting one another with hugs or hand-shakes, and we're wearing masks when less than 6 feet from others indoors and while singing. Due to virus spread, most of our vocal music ministries groups are on hold. All this, like so many other parts of life, is very different, and the need for it is passing quickly, but until then, thank you for loving one another in these ways.

The Passion Places: The Jerusalem Road
John 12:12-19

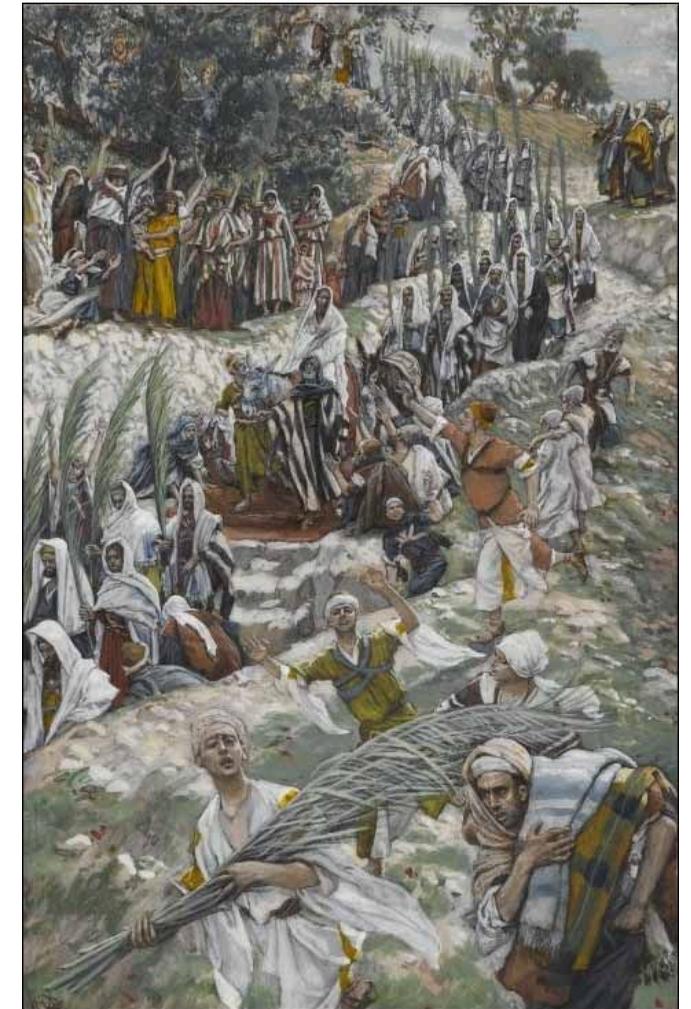
Pastor Daryl

RECORDINGS OF ALL MESSAGES ARE AVAILABLE.
Note "Message" and date on a Communication Card at the Welcome Center, and pick up your CD the following Sunday. Messages (audio, video and print) may also be downloaded at wilmorefmc.org.   

PRAYER SEEKING SALVATION: Lord Jesus, I know I have sinned against You. I believe that You died for me, and I place my trust in You. Forgive my sins and save me from the judgment to come. Help me to turn from my sin and live a life wholly devoted to You.

PRAYER SEEKING SANCTIFICATION: Lord Jesus, I recognize my need for holiness. Purify me of all that is unlike You, fill me with Your Holy Spirit until I am totally Yours, and set me apart for Your purposes from this day forward.

If you seek or have found salvation or sanctification today, please let a member of the pastoral staff know. We're here to help you on your journey.



THE PROCESSION IN THE STREETS OF JERUSALEM
James Tissot, late 1800's, French

WILMORE
FREE METHODIST CHURCH

MARCH 28, 2021
PALM SUNDAY

OFFICE@WFMC.NET

WWW.WILMOREFMC.ORG

859.858.3521

WELCOME TO church

Welcome to worship at WFMC!
Here are some helpful notes if you are new.

THE COMMUNICATION CARD is key to allowing us to welcome you fully. Please fill it out and drop it in the gold box after worship. We won't harass you, but we'd love to send a welcoming note.

THE WORSHIP GUIDE in this folder leads through our service. We try to use elements, liturgy, music and sacraments from a variety of Christian traditions to help lead people of all ages, stages, and tastes into God's presence. Worship is participatory, so please join in prayer, word, giving, and song.

NURSERY/CHILDCARE for children up to 4 years is available all morning in the Pre-school Complex, Building B.

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP (CW, age 4 through grade 3) is available in the 8:30a service only. After the Children's Time, children are escorted by CW Staff to A106. Following 8:30 worship, parents of children ages 4 through Kindergarten must pick up their children from Room A106. Children in grades 1-3 will be taken to their Sunday School classroom.

HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES are available in the foyer.

WHEELCHAIR SEATING is readily available in the center aisle or an usher will be glad to remove a sanctuary chair for your convenience.

PRAYER FOCUS: Lets pray for the places in our world where there is much unrest in these days—Haiti, Myanmar, Middle East, Latin America, just to name a few. May the Lord ride into these places, and ours, and bring victory.

WORLD MISSION FOCUS: CREATIVE ACCESS: Pray for the missionaries we support who work in closed countries, finding creative ways to share Christ in difficult circumstances. Pray for their children as well.

HOME MISSION FOCUS: Give thanks for Lexington Rescue Mission as they celebrate 20 years of ministry April 1. Pray for pastoral care coordinators Thomas Walker and Donna Junker and all who come to the mission for spiritual care.

YOUTH MINISTRY FOCUS: This week we will not have youth group on Wednesday night. Please join the church family both Maundy Thursday and Good Friday for Holy Week services, 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

NURSERY:

	TODAY/THIS WEEK	NEXT WEEK
8:30 Worship	M Brennan/B Diddle/O Proctor	L Branan/S Sweigard
Sunday School	C Blankenship/P Probst	C Blankenship/J Lovell
11:00Worship	J Madill/C Maynard/E Maynard	R Gouge/MK Kidwell/BK McMillen
Wed. Evening	Holy Week—No Wednesday activities	M Dargan/K Winter

• **HELP TELL THE WORLD THAT CHRIST IS RISEN!** Take a yard sign from the foyer and display it in your front yard early on Easter morning! Then keep it for next year...and the next, and the next!

• **MEMBERSHIP CLASS:** Mark your calendar for the next Membership Class, a Saturday seminar April 10, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon, in room A200. Write "Membership" on your Communications Card if you are interested.

• **THANK YOU** for faithfully giving to the church benevolence fund. We recently gave \$5,000 toward helping flood victims in Eastern Kentucky.

• **COUNTY-WIDE SPRING CLEANUP** is coming up April 3 -10. If you have items that are too hard for you to handle you may call Arv Metcalf at 858-4063 and he will see if he can help you. Please call early so that he can fit you into the schedule.

• **PRAYER OPPORTUNITY:** Are you getting "the shot?" Have you had the second one yet? While you're thinking about such things, how about a prayer booster. A five-week adult education elective, Prayer Boost, starts Sunday, April 18, 9:40 a.m. Stayed tuned for further announcements.

Early inquirers can email Lee Taylor at: gberrytaylor@windstream.net.

• **GREETERS NEEDED** for Children's Worship (children age 4 through grade 3.) No preparation required. Time commitment is one hour, two Sundays per month. Contact the office, or Andrew Sweigard, Children's Worship team leader.



CHILDREN'S WORSHIP JR. is now going to be available at the 8:30 service, starting next Sunday, April 4! We are still looking for helpers (adult volunteers) so we can provide CWJ at the 11:00 service as well. Would you be willing to serve one Sunday a month, helping the 2-3 year olds learn about Jesus? No preparation required. Please contact Grace McGlothlin if interested at: 502-496-0300 (call or text).



HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Wednesday, March 31 No evening activities

Maundy Thursday Worship, April 1, 7:00 p.m.

A service of reflection and meditation as we consider the last hours of Christ's life through Word, song and Holy Communion

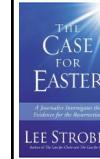
Good Friday Worship, April 2, 7:00 p.m.

Come and observe Jesus' passion and death on the cross for our sins. Consider the texts and the songs that tell the story of the cross and the tomb. Child care up to 48 months is provided.

Easter Sunday, April 4

7:00 a.m. Community Sunrise Service, AU baseball field
8:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m. Come worship Christ, the risen King!

Outreach Resources 2021

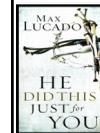
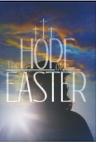


The Case for Easter—Lee Strobel

Strobel, a journalist investigates the evidence for Jesus' Resurrection. This is a more cerebral and objective book, written from a journalistic perspective who was actually trying to disprove Christianity and the Resurrection.

The Hope of Easter—John Cooley

Hope is a powerful force. It encourages us, motivates us, gives us purpose and can impact the course of our lives. The hope of Easter is found in the gospel message of love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the hope of eternal life. **The Hope of Easter** proclaims this truth through Scripture so that readers will marvel - either for the first time or renewed again - at God's love and mercy, and be changed forever.

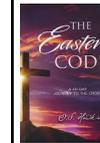


He Did This Just for You—Max Lucado

A more subjective and story-oriented work designed to tell the story of Jesus in a conversational and narrative manner.

Grace From the Cross—Kyle Idleman

We all have burdens of guilt and shame we carry around. But in truth, we're carrying around something that isn't ours. Our sins and shortcomings belong to Jesus. He carried them to the cross, paying our debt...and He wants to make sure we know it. This book explores the seven last sayings of Christ from the cross—both what He said and what His words mean for your life today.

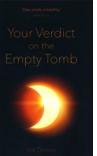


The Easter Code—O.S. Hawkins

This is a tremendous pre- or post-Easter devotional guide, with 40 days of devotions focusing on the places, people, and events in the life of Christ.

Your Verdict on the Empty Tomb of Jesus—Val Grieve

The linchpin of our faith is acceptance of the resurrection of Christ. Help atheists, skeptics, and those who still have questions to believe with the reasoned, cogent, and skillful presentation of a lawyer. Grieve's well-honed legal mind probes the historical evidence of the case, presenting a convincing, watertight conclusion.



God's Not Dead—Jim Poole and Garry Poole

Can the life of Jesus be proven? Does any hard evidence really exist for the events in Jesus' life? If so, is it reliable? What about His death by crucifixion? And can His alleged resurrection be credible? This book, based on the movie, enables readers to examine, question, and test the evidence for the historical Jesus, and decide for themselves.

Please take as many copies as you can give away to non-believing friends, co-workers, neighbors, and family.

PRAYER

Pastor Daryl

GOD'S WORD TO US

John 12:12-19

Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S TIME

Pastor Daryl

NURSERY/CHILDCARE for children up to 4 years is available in the Pre-school Complex, Building B.

CHILDREN'S WORSHIP (CW- currently 8:30 service only) After Children's Time, children age 4 through grade 3 will be dismissed (please wear masks) and escorted by CW staff to Room A106. Following 8:30 worship, parents of children ages 4 through Kindergarten must pick up their children from Room A106. Children in grades 1-3 will be taken to their Sunday School classroom.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Children in 8:30 service may now leave for Children's Worship

MUSIC MINISTRY

Gilbert M. Martin

Cry Out Hosanna! Hosanna!
Lydia Evans & Chloe Shafer

MESSAGE

Pastor Daryl

The Passion Places: The Jerusalem Road

POSTLUDE

arr. Anna Laura Page

All Glory, Laud and Honor (Hymnal 173)

WORSHIP IN GIVING

In this strange, "touchless" season, we are giving our finances in worship through either the gold boxes in the foyer, by mail, or digitally through *Engage* via this QR code.



👂 Help for the hearing impaired is available. See an usher for assistance.

WORSHIP GUIDE

God is so glad you've set aside this time to worship Him. He inhabits the praise of His people. As we gather, please take a moment to ask God to prepare us for worship—to open our ears and minds to His voice and to freely apply His word to our hearts and lives. Please also take a moment now to silence all electronic devices so that the Lord might have opportunity to freely speak to all.

GATHERING

Blessed Be Your Name arr. Larry Dalton
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (Hymnal 8) arr. Alex Zsolt
Jesus Is All the World to Me (Hymnal 510) arr. Stephen Walley
Joyful Day Mark Hayes

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Oh Lord, our God, how vast You are! How wide and how deep and how strong!

People: You are the God of all there is; the God of land and sea.

Leader: You are the God of time and space.

People: You are the God of all peoples, tribes and races.

Leader: You are the God of those who laugh and those who cry.

All: You are our God and we worship You. Join us here, and receive our praise and our worship with joy.

SONGS OF PALM SUNDAY PRAISE & ADORATION

Hymnal 174 *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna*
Hymnal 10 *O Worship the King*
Hymnal 30 *How Majestic Is Your Name*
Hymnal 31 *Great Is the Lord*

(Please wear a mask if you choose to sing)

CALL TO PRAYER

Hymnal 206 *There is a Redeemer* (stanza 1)
There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son;
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.
Thank You, oh my Father for giving us Your Son,
And leaving Your Spirit 'til the work on earth is done.

(CCLI Member)

174 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Hosanna to the Son of David! . . . Hosanna in the highest! Matt. 21:9

1. Ho - san - na, loud ho - san - na The lit - tle chil - dren sang;
2. From Ol - i - vet they fol - lowed 'Mid an ex - ult - ant crowd,
3. "Ho - san - na in the high - est!" That an - cient song we sing,

Optional Children's Choir (1st and 3rd stanzas)

Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na to the King;
Through pil - lared court and tem - ple The love - ly an - them rang;
The vic - tor palm branch wav - ing, And chant - ing clear and loud;
For Christ is our Re - deem - er, The Lord of heav'n, our King;

Ho - san - na, praise ye the Lord, Sing in one ac - cord!
To Je - sus, who had blessed them Close fold - ed to His breast,
The Lord of men and an - gels Rode on in low - ly state,
O may we ev - er praise Him With heart and life and voice,

TEXT: Jenette Threlfall; based on Matthew 21:15, 16
MUSIC: *Gesangbuch der Herzogl. Württemberg*, 1784;
Descant, final ending and handbell parts by Bruce Greer
A higher setting may be found at No. 59

ELLACOMBE
7.6.7.6.D.

HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na to the King!

The chil - dren sang their prais - es, The sim - plest and the best.
Nor scorned that lit - tle chil - dren Should on His bid - ding wait.
And in His bliss - ful pres - ence E - ter - nal - ly re - joice!

This block contains the first two stanzas of the hymn. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and a bass line. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The first stanza is a simple melody, and the second stanza is a more complex piano accompaniment.

Optional final ending

Children alone *ritard*

King! Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na to the King!

joice! *Keyboard only* *ritard*

This block contains an optional final ending for the hymn. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment, and a bass line. The key signature is three flats and the time signature is 4/4. The section is marked with 'ritard' (ritardando) and 'tr' (trill) markings. The lyrics are 'King! Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na to the King!' and 'joice!'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'Keyboard only'.

Optional 2 Octave Handbells (2nd and 3rd stanzas) *tr*

This block contains an optional part for 2 octave handbells. It features a single line of music with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The key signature is three flats. The music is marked with 'tr' (trill) markings and a wavy line indicating a trill. The lyrics are 'joice!'.

10 O Worship the King

Praise the Lord . . . clothed with splendor and majesty. Ps. 104:1



- 1. O wor-ship the King, all glo-rious a - bove, And grate-ful-ly sing
- 2. O tell of His might, O sing of His grace, Whose robe is the light,
- 3. Thy boun-ti - ful care what tongue can re - cite? It breathes in the air,
- 4. Frail chil-dren of dust, and fee - ble as frail, In Thee do we trust,



His won - der - ful love; Our Shield and Dé - fend - er, the An - cient of
whose can - o - py space! His char - iots of wrath the deep thun-der-clouds
it shines in the light, It streams from the hills, it de - scends to the
nor find Thee to fail: Thy mer - cies how ten - der, how firm to the



Days, Pa - vil - ioned in splen-dor, and gird - ed with praise.
form, And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.
plain, And sweet-ly dis - tills in the dew and the rain.
end, Our Mak - er, De - fend - er, Re - deem - er, and Friend. A - men.



*Optional last stanza harmonization
Descant*



Broaden - 4. Frail chil - dren of dust, and



storm. *Unison* - 4. Frail chil - dren of dust, and



TEXT: Robert Grant

MUSIC: William Gardiner's *Sacred Melodies*, 1815; arranged from Johann M. Haydn;

Last stanza harmonization and descant by Herbert Colvin

LYONS

10.10.11.11.

How Majestic Is Your Name 30

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! Ps. 8:1

O Lord, our Lord, how ma - jes - tic is Your name in all the

earth. O earth. O Lord, we praise Your name. O

Lord, we mag - ni - fy Your name: Prince of Peace, might - y

God; O Lord God Al - might y. O y.

TEXT and MUSIC: Michael W. Smith

HOW MAJESTIC
Irregular meter

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3 Music Sq. W., Nashville, TN 37203. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.

Optional transition to "Great Is the Lord"

New tempo
♩ = ca. 63

31 Great Is the Lord

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. Ps. 145:3

Unison

Great is the Lord, He is ho-ly and just; By His pow-er we trust in His

love. Great is the Lord, He is faith-ful and true; By His mer-cy He

proves He is love. *Parts optional*
1, 2. Great is the Lord and wor-thy of glo-ry!
(D.S.) Great are You, Lord, and wor-thy of glo-ry!

Great is the Lord and wor- thy of praise. Great is the Lord; now
Great are You, Lord, and wor- thy of praise. Great are You, Lord; I

lift up your voice, Now lift up your voice: Great is the
lift up my voice, I lift up my voice: Great are You,

TEXT and MUSIC: Michael W. Smith and Deborah D. Smith

GREAT IS THE LORD
Irregular meter

3rd time to Coda 1 | 2 D.S. al Coda

Lord! Great is the Lord!
Lord! Great Great are You, Lord!

Coda * Optional choral ending

Lord! Great are You, Lord! Great are You, Lord!

*Observe fermatas if choral ending is not used.

Great are You, Lord!

8va --- 8va

The end of "HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME—A Brief Service in Recognition of God's Majesty and Power"

Holy Lord 32

3 Part canon

The glory of the Lord fills the whole earth. Num. 14:21

I

Ho-ly, ho-ly, Lord, God al-might-y; Your glo-ry fills the earth, Lord God of hosts.

II

Ho - ly, Lord, God al-might-y; Your glo-ry fills the earth, Lord God of hosts.

III

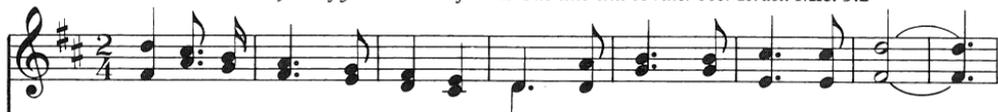
Ho - ly, Lord, God al-might-y; Your glo-ry fills the earth, Lord God of hosts.

TEXT: Gerald S. Henderson; based on Isaiah 6:3
MUSIC: Source unknown; adapted by Gerald S. Henderson

DONA NOBIS PACEM
Irregular meter

Joy to the World! 125

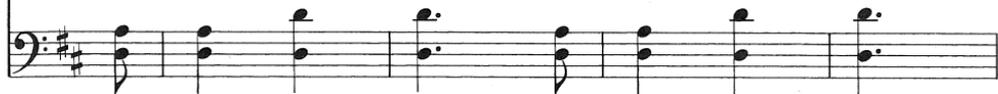
Bethlehem . . . , out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel. Mic. 5:2



- 1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; Let earth re-ceive her King;
2. Joy to the earth! the Sav-ior reigns; Let men their songs em-ploy;
3. No more let sins and sor-rows grow, Nor thorns in- fest the ground;
- 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the na-tions prove



Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him room,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
He comes to make His bless - ings flow
The glo - ries of His righ - teous - ness,



And heav'n and na - ture sing, And heav'n and na - ture sing,
Re - peat the sound-ing joy, Re - peat the sound-ing joy,
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found,
And won-ders of His love, And won-ders of His love,

1. And heav'n and na-ture sing,

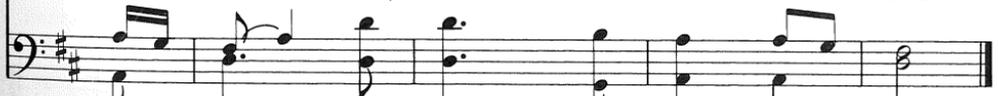


1. And heav'n and na-ture sing,

And heav'n and na-



And heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
Re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
Far as, far as the curse is found.
And won - ders, won - ders of His love.



ture sing,

Choral Ending on the following page.

TEXT: Isaac Watts
MUSIC: George Frederick Handel, arranged by Lowell Mason;
Choral ending arranged by Tom Fettke

ANTIOCH
C.M.

Holy Sexuality and the Gospel
By Chris Yuan
Multnomah, 2018

One of the main reasons I include this chapter on spiritual family is because of the growing trend of Christians believing that involvement in the local church—our *spiritual* family—is unnecessary. They will often justify their stance like this: “I have close Christian friends. Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian. The church is not a building, but it’s people. My Christian friends and I *are* the church, so we don’t need to go to church.”

This can be dangerous and disastrous for anybody—including individuals with same-sex attractions. These men and women may experience intimacy and commitment with their Christian friends but are isolated from true family. Being untethered from a local church is being untethered from Christ. How can we have union with Christ if we don’t have union with the body of Christ?

Christian friends are essential and can provide godly counsel. But they can also provide poor counsel, especially when separated from the wisdom and accountability of the people of God. Solomon’s son Rehoboam listened to his imprudent friends, and this led to the breakup of the united kingdom. “But [Rehoboam] abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him” (1 Kings 12:8).

Job lost everything, but his three friends went and sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights. While mourning together, they spoke no words (Job 2:13). Sadly, trouble came when Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar opened their mouths. The rest of the book consists mostly of their poor advice to Job and Job’s defense. In the end, God rebuked these three friends for their folly (42:7-8).

Christian friends are *part of* the body of Christ, but we cannot say they *are* the body of Christ or can replace it! So what’s the difference between a regular and intentional gathering of Christian friends and the regular and intentional gathering of the local church? Aren’t these two basically the same? No, they are fundamentally different in at least three important ways: the preaching of God’s Word, the sacraments or ordinances, and headship.

The Preaching of God’s Word

I don’t know of any friends who regularly hang out together and actually preach to one another. They may talk *about* God’s Word, but this is different from the public proclamation of God’s Word. The reading, teaching, and preaching of Scripture are inherent aspects of the local body of Christ.

When ancient Israel gathered, the leaders publicly read Scripture to the people of God (Exodus 24:7; Joshua 8:34; 2 Kings 23:2; Nehemiah 8:8). The first-century church continued this practice of publicly reading God’s Word (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 1 Timothy 4:13).

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul provides some instructions on the worship gatherings of the local body of believers in Ephesus. He exhorts Timothy to be devoted to the public reading and teaching of Scripture and to exhortation (1 Timothy 4:13). In his last-known letter to Timothy, the apostle reminds his disciple, “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2).

The preaching of God's Word is one of the main things that separate the local church from a gathering of Christians. It helps believers stay anchored in correct doctrine and away from false teaching. But how is this different from going to a conference where the Word of God is being preached? The local church also baptizes converts and administers the Lord's Supper (the sacraments and ordinances).

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The ordinances or sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are specific to the church. The only form of covenanted relationships that the New Testament conveys is one shaped by God's grand story: spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood. The redeemed are family with baptism as the initial sign of the covenant and the Lord's Supper as the ongoing affirmation of this covenant.

We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Baptism also unites us with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). We regularly receive the Lord's Supper to remember and "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Corinthians 11:26). The local body of believers baptizes and partakes of the Lord's Supper as a way of "covenanting" together as the family of God.

But again, what is the difference between two covenanted best friends and the family of God? Not only is the Word of God not regularly preached, but two best friends also don't constitute the body of Christ under spiritual headship, where discipleship, accountability, discipline, and restoration are inherent aspects.

Headship and the Body

The body of Christ has many members. Paul explains, "For the body does not consist of one member but of many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). A body has a head, and the head of the body is Christ himself (Colossians 1:18). The body is also made up of church leaders who guide and shepherd the flock as pastors (Ephesians 4:11-12).

While best friends can tend to be more inward focused and sometimes isolated, spiritual family should be both inward and outward focused. As brothers and sisters, we are tethered to the local church and under its spiritual authority. This accountability helps foster healthy relationships that aren't segregated from the body of believers.

Our pastors, elders, and church leaders must be present in our lives. But this occurs only if we include them and allow them to speak wisdom and truth to us. In essence, this is discipleship. Although discipleship involves a strong friendship between mentor and disciple, friendship is not equivalent to discipleship. The ideal context for discipleship is the local church.

Accountability for both encouragement and correction is a key aspect in the life of every Christian, but it involves work and risk. Fortunately, accountability is inherent in a healthy church. Jesus lays the framework of accountability and discipleship, both of which are family responsibilities:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses

to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)

In verses 21-22, we learn that not only are accountability and discipleship inherent in spiritual family but forgiveness and restoration are as well. Peter asks, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answers him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Discipline must always be done with the intent of restoration and forgiveness (2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 6:1).

Regrettably, church discipline is often ignored or, when applied, seems more retributive in nature than filled with the hope of a redemptive restoration. Especially for those guilty of sexual sin, a lot of shame, isolation, and fear are involved. Biblical restoration after a moral fall is essentially a family reunion where the prodigal comes back from a far country and is again one with the body of Christ.

Are we doing family well? Is this a lived-out reality? The church isn’t as healthy as it should be. We have much to improve in this area because we aren’t truly acting as we ought. If we really lived as spiritual family, as true brothers and sisters in Christ, I believe we could effectively mitigate issues like loneliness and isolation, along with the sorrow and pain that often accompany them.

Relationships with our brothers or sisters in Christ should be among the most intimate and real relationships we have. One-flesh union of husband and wife makes it unique compared with other relationships. Yet it is still a temporary union for our time on earth. The only permanent human relationship is between those bound by Christ’s blood in the spiritual family of God.

However, we must say this: friendship is not meant to replace marriage, and marriage is not meant to replace friendship. The reason why we do not need a covenant best friend is simply because God has given us covenant brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. This doesn’t mean that you’ll be close to all in the same way—we will have closer brothers or sisters. In the same way, marriage is not meant to replace the godly same-sex sibling relationships we must cultivate as we follow Jesus together!

The key to a healthy and intimate spiritual family is integration. This should be inherent in the local church, but it isn’t always the case. If we indeed lived as family, we wouldn’t be so segregated. There’s a place for more narrowly focused fellowship groups, but a healthy church is an integrated church. The church as family affirms that life together is necessary and beneficial for all—same-sex attracted or opposite-sex attracted, single or married.

We learn and grow from one another. A single person can learn so much from a married individual, and vice versa. The same applies to age differences as well. Why are our youth not learning from some of our older saints? And why are young couples not learning from some of the godly, single elderly women and men in our congregations?

In the relational voids that are common in churches, many Christians with same-sex attractions want to find a friend just like them who can completely understand their situation. But maybe this isn’t part of God’s plan. Why do we need to find someone *just like us*? I know that it’s more comfortable and it’s easier. But God wants to stretch and grow us. It’s more challenging to develop brotherhood or sisterhood with someone very different, but it brings great reward.

My best friend, Joe Hendrickson, is a true brother in the Lord. We were roommates at Moody Bible Institute, and he now serves as an associate pastor in the Spokane area. Our brotherhood has continued to this day. Honestly, we're quite different. He loves the outdoors, and I would rather stay inside. He's excellent at every sport, and I can barely catch a ball. I'm an extrovert, and he's an introvert. But we both love the Lord.

Joe is one of the most honest and transparent young men I know, a man who passionately loves the Lord and wants him to be known. It's because of our differences, not in spite of them, that I've tremendously grown through our relationship to love Jesus more. If I were looking for someone just like me, I would never have had this close brother relationship.

Again, my fear with focusing too much on a best friend, especially one who's just like me, is that I'll miss out on the diversity of the family of God and all it means. If we're family, then nuclear families won't treat singles like outsiders. The homes of families would have singles in them who aren't "physical" family. However, married people must take the initiative.

It's much harder—and sometimes inappropriate—for a single person to invite himself into the life and home of a family. But it's completely appropriate for a husband and wife to invite a single sister or brother into the regular life of the couple's home. I dream of the day when this becomes a reality. Imagine the message a married couple conveys when they give their single friend a house key and say, "Come whenever you want. *We are family!*"¹⁰

I cannot stress too much how crucial spiritual family is for singles—particularly those with the "double curse" of having same-sex attractions. We have no family of our own. No spouse to hold when we lie in bed. No kids to return to after a rough and tiring day. For many, it's just an empty dark and cold apartment.

Spiritual family means that if the church were actually the church, if the body of Christ were actually the body of Christ, if the family of God were actually the family of God, then *not* having a physical family wouldn't really matter! Because we'd have *real* family. A family that is eternal. I'd have spiritual brothers and sisters to hold me and comfort me and love me and point me to Christ.

Will you commit to making this a reality for the sake of me and all Christian singles? More importantly, will you do it for the sake of Christ, by making the beauty and glory of his body known? "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Politics Is Seeping Into Our Daily Life and Ruining Everything

Americans are choosing jobs, brands, and friends for partisan reasons, say researchers.

J.D. TUCCILLE | 2.17.2021 7:00 AM

Is there anything that politics can't ruin? The answer, it appears, is a resounding "no" as partisan conflict creeps into all areas of American life. Our political affiliations, researchers say, obstruct friendships, influence our purchases, affect the positions we take on seemingly apolitical matters, and limit our job choices. As a result, many people are poorer, lonelier, and less healthy than they would otherwise be.

"Political polarization is having far-reaching impacts on American life, harming consumer welfare and creating challenges for people ranging from elected officials and policymakers to corporate executives and marketers," according to a new paper in the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* by researchers from Arizona State University, the University of Wyoming, and four other U.S. universities.

The researchers find that people's chosen political identities become self-reinforcing through associations with groups with shared beliefs. Our associations can even create a "group-specific shared reality" that makes it harder to relate to those with opposing views.

"As society has become increasingly polarized, politicians' objectives diverge and their animosity toward the opposition grows, thereby reducing opportunity for compromise," the researchers warn. "Partisan incivility is a major reason for failed dialogue: Uncivil exchanges result in disagreement and greater polarization regardless of the evidence presented."

People's partisan identities influence the range of people with whom they are willing to have relationships, the brands they purchase, and the jobs they take. In an era of public health concerns, people often choose positions on matters such as vaccines or mask-wearing not based on a rational assessment of the issues, but on a plug-and-play adoption of their tribe's stances. This sort of politicized decision-making can stand in the way of rational choices and healthy connections.

"With political positions influencing decisions, people may sacrifice wages, lose out on jobs, make suboptimal purchases and disregard opportunities to save," the researchers note. "For example, research has found that employees accept lower wages to work for politically like-minded entities, and people may select higher-priced products or ones that offer less-functional value."

"Polarization has the potential to prevent neighbors or colleagues of opposing parties from developing friendships. This ultimately deprives individuals of intellectual diversity, among other things," they add.

The finding that everything is becoming politicized builds on a growing mountain of data. Even before political tensions hit their current fever pitch, a 2018 survey found that "Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of consumers around the world will buy or boycott a brand solely because of its position on a social or political issue" (the number for the U.S. was 59 percent). In 2020, a separate survey reported that "83% of Millennials find it important for the companies they buy from to align with their values."

That means that the price and utility of products and services are actually secondary considerations for many people, taking a back seat to companies' public posturing. Many business executives have risen to the challenge, advocating positions on gun control, immigration, and race relations, whether because they sense an opening to promote their opinions, or just a marketing opportunity.

"These leaders hope that their political activism will help shape public opinion and potentially lead to lasting change, while simultaneously cementing their reputations as moral leaders and change agents," Christine Moorman wrote for *Forbes*. She noted that, as of 2018, most marketing experts considered this a bad move with the potential for alienating both customers and employees.

Since then, the trend has only intensified — especially after former President Trump's challenge to election results and in the wake of the January 6 riot at the Capitol. Recent events "accelerate a broader movement in business to address social and political issues" according to a January 15 piece in the Wall Street Journal.

This politicization of all things great and small is what another researcher referred to last summer as the "oil spill" model of mass opinion polarization.

"What if polarization is less like a fence getting taller over time and more like an oil spill that spreads from its source to gradually taint more and more previously 'apolitical' attitudes, opinions, and preferences?" Pennsylvania State University's Daniel DellaPosta asked in a study published in June 2020 in *American Sociological Review*. "Even many initially apolitical lifestyle characteristics, from musical taste to belief in astrology, can become politicized as signals for deeper beliefs and preferences—a tendency most saliently captured in the popular image of the 'latte liberal'."

Americans, then, are increasingly making decisions along tribal political lines, potentially depriving themselves of rewarding friendships, better-paying jobs, well-reasoned judgments, and optimal goods and services. But by choosing beverages, beans, sports equipment, and employment according to tribal affiliation, they are also losing points of shared interest with people who disagree with them. The people they see in their neighborhoods, at concerts, and in their chosen restaurants likely share their views on hot-button issues, because those who disagree live, party, and shop elsewhere. That further reduces the opportunity for connections across partisan boundaries.

Worse, when the political tribes are so divorced from one another in terms of preferences and lifestyles, it becomes easier to target the "enemy" by going after their ways of life. With conservatives largely living in rural areas and exurbs, and liberals confining themselves to cities and suburbs, and the groupings having shrinking overlap in terms of their interests, it's pretty easy to hurt opponents by targeting pastimes and brands for boycotts, regulatory action, or legal restrictions.

"I think we're all aware of how political polarization has affected our elections and system of government, but the impacts go far beyond the political arena," comments Dave Sprott, dean of the University of Wyoming's College of Business and one of the authors of the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* paper. "Ultimately, polarization harms mental and physical health, financial welfare, relationships and societal interests through its impact on psychology, marketing and public policy outcomes."

There is nothing we can or should do about people's lifestyle choices, but we can give them less reason to fight. Making politics less important through reducing the ability of government to affect our lives has the potential to make us all healthier and happier.

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