Worship Service for June 22, 2025

Celebrating the Hymns of Charles Wesley

(All words will be on the screen for songs, scripture, responsive readings will be on the screen on the video.)

Prelude-		Donna Brown
Announcements and Service Introduction		Hal Gatewood
Special Recognition and Thanks		
John Wesley's Directions for Singing		Tom Triplett
Call to Worship	And Are We Yet Alive	UMH 553 (Vs. 1 & 6)
Congregational Prayer-	For True Singing	UMH 69
Hymn of Praise-	Rejoice, the Lord is King	UMH 715 (Vs. 1 & 2
Reading re: Wesley's conversion experience		
Responsive Reading -	Psalm 107: 1-9	UMH 830 & 831
The conversion story continues of both Charles and John		
Morning Prayers and The Lord's Prayer		Debbie Epps
Offering and the Doxology		UMH 95
Background info on early hymns		
Hymn	O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing	UMH 57 (Vs. 1, 3, & 6)
Reading regarding mission work of the Wesleys		
John Wesley's Works of Mercy		Tom Triplett
Hymn	A Charge to Keep I Have	UMH 413 (Vs. 1, 2 & 4)
Reading regarding the love of God as depicted in song		
Special Music	Jesus, Lover of My Soul	
Choir	Reader- Amanda Whitehead	Accompanist – Judy Spencer

Hymn 4	Soldiers of Christ, Arise	UMH 513 (Vs. 1 &
Hymn (Vs. 1 & 2)	Jesus, United by Thy Grace	UMH 561
Hymn 3)	Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	UMH 240 (Vs. 1 &
Hymn 4)	Christ the Lord is Risen Today	UMH 302 (Vs. 1 &
Hymn of Benediction (Vs 1 & 5)	Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love	UMH 566

Hal Gatewood - Worship Leader:

This is the Day that the Lord has made

Thank you, Donna for the gathering music and for all your hard work in putting this service together for us this morning.

This is the First Sunday of Summer!

We bring you greeting from Pastor Steve who is at Annual Conference today. He left us in good hands, not mine, but Donna and Judy for your playing and Debbie and Mike for running the PowerPoint and Sound and Amanda for streaming the service.

Phillip and Susan

Tom for creating the PowerPoint and also being John Wesley.

Just a few announcements

- Tom Young passed away and we keep his wife, Elsie and family in our thoughts and prayers.
- Sign in book is in the Narthex
- Our choir will practice tonight at 5:30
- Thursday, the Sunshine Club will have lunch together at 11:30 at the Parkway House in Hickory.
- Next Sunday, our pastor will be back and the July newsletter will be ready for you to pick up
- Fred Travis – I hope I don't have to remind you that Brenda's birthday is tomorrow!
- Are there any other announcements?

Special Recognition and Thanks

Donna and Judy, will you join me at the front?

As you will hear in our program today, music has been an important part of Methodism since it began, and music has certainly been an important part of our church since it began almost 150 years ago.

In fact, the music program was one of the reasons Margaret and I came to Catawba about 20 years ago.

Throughout much of our history, we have had a music director…a paid member of our staff… who was responsible for helping pick out the hymns for worship, help direct the choir and help with special programs (cantatas) at Christmas and Easter.

But our church took quite a blow during the Covid years. Because of the pandemic and some other issues, we lost a lot of members.

Then, in the spring of 2021, our last music director, Michaele Day, retired after serving 25 years.

Our tithes and offerings were such that we just could not afford another director of music, even if we could find one.

A real concern…was that our worship services would not have music. But two of our members, Donna Brown and Judy Spencer, came to the pastor and said we will take turns and we will make sure our worship services have music.

And that doesn't mean just showing up on Sunday morning to play the piano or organ for 3 or 4 hymns.

- You have to communicate with the pastor well ahead of each service (there have been 3 pastors during this time).
- You have to come at least once a week, often more, to practice the hymns.
- You have to prepare several other songs for gathering and exiting music
- You have to be prepared to help with memorial services and holidays

For the past 4 years, we have not had a single worship service when we did not have music available!

And they have never taken or asked for any compensation.

Since we know they would both be here this morning, we wanted to take an opportunity to say thank you.

Thank you, Donna and Judy! Will you join me in showing our appreciation?

Service Introduction and "Directions for Singing"

Hal-Today we are looking back on the life of Charles Wesley who was born in 1707 in Epworth, England and who died in 1788 at age 81. He was the 18th of 19 children born to Rev. Samuel Wesley and his wife, Susannah. Charles was also the younger brother of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement which later became the United Methodist Church.

Music was an important part of Methodism from its beginning. In fact, John Wesley published "Directions for Singing" for his early congregations. The directions included these instructions, straight from the words of John Wesley himself:

Tom T.-"Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength.... Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together... Sing in time. Whatever time is sung, be sure to keep with it. And take care not to sing too slow.... Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself.....So shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve..."

Hal- With these instructions in mind, let's stand and sing our Call to Worship, "And Are We Yet Alive" - a Charles Wesley hymn that is used every year as the opening hymn at Annual Conference. We will sing verses 1 & 6 from the hymnal.

Our congregational prayer can be found on page 69, "For True Singing". Let's read together

Please remain standing for our hymn of praise, Rejoice, the Lord is King. It is found on page 715. We will sing verses 1 & 2)

You may be seated.

Charles Wesley's conversion came in 1738 when he was 31 years old. Even though he was the grandson and son of ministers, the brother of a minister and an ordained clergyman himself in the Church of England, he lacked a true faith in Jesus Christ. Even though he was a graduate of Oxford and one of the founders of a "Holy Club" while in college, he was unsure of his salvation. And even though he had traveled across the Atlantic to the colony of Georgia with his missionary brother, John, he did not know God personally.

On May 21, 1738, he was recovering from an illness in the home of a friend, John Bray. While lying in bed he heard a voice saying, “In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities.” The voice was most likely Mr. Bray’s sister who felt commanded to say these words in a dream. Charles immediately got out of bed and opened his Bible. He recalled some writings of Martin Luther – stating that salvation came by grace through faith, not by good works. These are Charles’ own words from his journal:

“At midnight I gave myself up to Christ, assured I was safe, sleeping or waking.....I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. Under his protection I waked next morning, and rejoiced in reading the 107th Psalm, so nobly describing what God had done for my soul.“

Let’s now join together in reading responsively a portion of Psalm 107 as found on page 830. It will be on the screen.

Charles continued to write in his journal..... “At nine I began (to write) a hymn on my conversion but was persuaded to break off for fear of pride. Mr. Bray coming, encouraged me to proceed in spite of Satan. I prayed to Christ to stand by me and I finished the hymn.”

This hymn is believed to be “Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin?” The words to this song can be found on page 342 of our hymnal. It was the first of some 6,500 hymns that Charles Wesley would compose!

Three days after Charles’ conversion, his brother, John, similarly gave himself to Christ while attending a Moravian meeting on Aldersgate Street. It was there that John recalled, “I felt my heart strangely warmed” as he studied the epistle to the Romans. John hurried to see Charles - who was still recuperating- burst into the room and announced, “I believe!” Charles recalled, “We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer.”

Now we invite **Debbie** to come forward and lead us in our morning prayers. .....

Hal- Please stand as our offering is brought forward and we sing our doxology on page 95. (Congregation may sit after offering)

Several well-known hymns quickly followed: And Can It be that I Should Gain was first published in 1739. It contains the heartfelt line

“Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

On the first anniversary of his salvation experience, Charles wrote his number one best-seller, O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing. It was published in 1740 and has

traditionally been the opening song in Methodist hymnals throughout the world since a Methodist songbook was printed in 1780. It originally had 18 verses, but we'll only sing three! You may remain seated as we joyfully sing verses 1, 3 & 6 of this great hymn.

John Wesley believed in and practiced what he called "Works of Mercy", a central component of our church's missionary work today. What were these "Works of Mercy"? Rev. Wesley will now share these with us:

> **Tom T.-** Works of mercy include feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, assisting the stranger, visiting those that are sick or in prison, comforting the afflicted, instructing the ignorant.... and encouraging the well-doer.

Hal- While John was preaching about missions, Charles was writing hymns about them.

His mission hymns became known around the world when missionaries began carrying small songbooks to other countries in the 1800's. Charles reminds us all of the work we need to do for God's kingdom in the hymn, A Charge to Keep I Have. It is found on page 413 and we will sing verses 1, 2 & 4.

The love of God was also a common theme, especially in the hymns, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling", "Depth of Mercy", and "O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done." This theme continues in the song the choir will share in a moment. Henry Ward Beecher said that he would rather have written Jesus, Lover of My Soul "than to have all the fame of all the Kings that ever lived." (The choir comes forward – Amanda introduces the song.

Amanda- "There are many stories connected with the origin of this famous hymn. One has it that a dove, pursued by a hawk, took refuge in Wesley's room. Another story concerns his escape from a threatening mob. Whatever the cause, the hymn is a source of comfort that has brought peace and contentment to many."

Hal- With the expansion of Methodist societies and bands in England (and) the open-air preaching by John Wesley.....early Methodists experienced persecution..... Reports from this time detail riots, mob attacks, stonings, clubbings, vandalized homes and meeting houses and verbal attacks.... It was in the midst of these turbulent times....that Charles Wesley....wrote his hymn, Soldiers of Christ, Arise.

This hymn has been published in 826 different hymnals of differing faiths. His original version contained 16 stanzas. It has been called a "magnificient marching poem" and it focuses on the struggle of good against evil. You may remain seated as we sing verses 1 & 4, page 513.

Christian friendship and fellowship was a primary topic for Charles Wesley who devoted 55 hymns to this theme. One of the best-known in this group of hymns was shortened to

6 verses from its original 29! And it can be found in 150 different songbooks under 11 different tunes. The original title was A Prayer for Persons Joined in Fellowship but we know it as Jesus, United by Thy Grace. Please stay seated as we sing verses 1 & 2, page 561.

I am sure you have heard some familiar songs by now. But even if you haven't, you will certainly recognize these hymns by Charles Wesley. He wrote many songs for the special seasons and days of the church year.

For Advent we have Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus and for Christmas there is Hark! The Herald Angels Sing. For communion he wrote Come, Sinners to the Gospel Feast. During Lent we sing 'Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies and an Easter favorite is Christ the Lord is Risen Today.

Let's stand and sing with the joy we feel on both Christmas and Easter! We'll sing the first and last verses of #240 and the first and fourth verses of #302.

Please remain standing for our song of benediction, Blest Be the Dear Uniting Love, found on page 566, verses 1 & 5. And we hope you leave with a song in your heart!

Sources:

Be Thou My Vision by John Fischer

Charles Wesley (booklet) by Elmer T. Clark

Spiritual Moments with the Great Hymns by Evelyn Bence

God's Mission – God's Song by Joyce D. Sohl

The Methodist Hymnal – 1964, 1966

The United Methodist Hymnal – 1989

The Celebration Hymnal – 1997

Hymns to Play and Sing by Walter Eckard - 1958

General Board of Discipleship (GBOD.org), History of Hymns

Bicentennial Calendar of American Methodism – 1784- 1984