



# The eNewsletter

December 17, 2015

A publication of Covenant Presbyterian Church, 8451 East Brainerd Road, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37421  
423.899.5377 [www.covenantchattanooga.org](http://www.covenantchattanooga.org)

## Looking Ahead...

### December 18

Ladies' Friday Bible Study

### December 20

Morning Worship  
Sunday School

### December 24

Church Office Closed -  
Christmas Eve  
Lessons & Carols

### December 25

Church Office Closed -  
Christmas

### December 27

Morning Worship  
Sunday School

### December 31

Church Office Closed at noon -  
New Year's Eve

### January 1

Church Office Closed -  
New Year's Day

### January 3

Lord's Supper Celebrated  
Sunday School

### January 4

Ladies' Monday Night Bible  
Study

### January 5

Women's Council Meeting

### January 6

Wednesday Night Supper  
Wednesday Night Activities  
Session Meeting

### January 7

Ladies' Thursday Bible Study

### January 9

Men's Breakfast

### January 10

Morning Worship  
Sunday School  
Missions Committee  
Diaconate Meeting  
SNL

### January 13

Wednesday Night Supper  
Wednesday Night Activities

### January 14

Ladies' Thursday Bible Study

## From the Pen of an Elder...

Masterpieces of Christian music can be used as devotional literature. Through attentive engagement with great music a Christian may find new awareness of the things of God. The kind of engagement that I mean is apart from the sheer aesthetic encounter with what is beautiful. While the right kind of aesthetic experiences can be spiritually beneficial, the devotional use of music that I have in mind is of a more ordinary kind. I suggest that music can be studied for spiritual profit in much the same way that a book of Christian devotion is studied - with sanctified critical reflection.

A very small example will suffice to illustrate what I intend, and a very small example is all that space permits. I would like to show how the contemplation of a few measures from *Messiah* can reinforce the truth we heard in last Sunday morning's sermon from Zephaniah.

There is no better introduction to the devotional contemplation of music than Handel's *magnum opus*. It is especially accessible because it is a work with an explicitly Christian text taken mainly from scripture. It is possible that no other artwork in history has made so many people so willing to hear the word of God so frequently.

I will focus on the vocal entrance in the opening recitative. It is the first time in the oratorio that you hear a human voice, a tenor, the higher of the two basic male voice types. Because of its clarity and expressiveness, tenor is the melodic default (in fact, a few generations before Handel's time the word *tenor* was practically synonymous with *main melody*). The tenor is the trumpet of the choir, and like a trumpet it can be loud and brilliant, but also surprisingly soft spoken. It is the gentle yet clear side of the tenor voice that Handel calls on for this opening recitative.

The piece is set in the glad key of E major. The score is marked *Larghetto e piano*, that is, "a little slow and soft." After a calm but expressive introduction in the strings with

simple, evenly pulsing eighth-notes, we hear the first words of the long oratorio-- "Comfort ye" - sung tenderly. The tenderness we hear is in the music more than the words, for the text could have been expressed in many different ways. Handel is *inflecting* the words through his musical choices. He even takes the trouble, rare in the Baroque period, of giving bowing directions to the strings so that they will use a bowing technique called *loure* that groups the repeated notes under one bow stroke. The result is both calmer and more expressive than playing down-up-down-up.

But the full force of Handel's setting cannot be felt without hearing the dark overture that precedes it. It is a *sinfonia* with no text - no tender voice. It contrasts with the recitative in almost every way. It is written in E minor. The introduction is marked *Grave* and *forte*. Its dissonant chords are played in the agitated, unequal dotted notes of the French overture style. No *loure* bowing here - no calm, even eighth-notes. After the introduction, a fast fugue terminates on a confirmed E minor chord, and the darkness seems settled in the silence that follows.

Then...E major. *Larghetto e piano*. *Loure* bowing. Calm, even, pulsing strings. A soft tenor voice: "Comfort ye."

Like the prophecy of Zephaniah, the contrast is stark, sudden, and uncompelled. There is no hint in Zephaniah that judgment would suddenly turn to salvation. There is no hint in the *sinfonia* that minor would turn to major. The overwhelming relief of the last chapters of Zephaniah cannot be experienced without first feeling the weight of the first chapters. The full brightness of the recitative cannot be experienced without first hearing the darkness of the *sinfonia*. *Ante lucem tenebras*: before light, darkness. Before E major, E minor. This is true Theology. Before grace, need. Before mercy, conviction. Before fulfillment, longing. Before Christmas, Advent.

~John Wykoff



## What's Happening?

### Nursery Schedule December 20

#### Worship

##### Infants

Esther McEachern  
& Beth Griggs

##### Creepers

Andrea Waldecker  
& Lisa Hobbs

##### Toddlers

Catherine Pippin  
& Charlotte Pippin

##### Floater

Grace Pippin

### Sunday School

##### Infants

Selah Cross  
& Tammy Higgins

##### Creepers

Debby Gardner  
& Sophia Cross

##### Toddlers

Brandon Cross  
& William Higgins

### December Coordinator:

Joyce Trask

### CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Come celebrate the birth of our Savior on Christmas Eve, December 24, at 5:30 p.m. with a service of Lessons and Carols.

### OFFERING ENVELOPES

If you ordered Offering Envelopes for 2016, they are available this Sunday in the lobby.

### SNL

SNL is not meeting in the month of December and will resume January 10.

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY

Pastor Pirschel's Wednesday Night Bible Study will not meet in December. Class will resume January 6.

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPER

The next supper is scheduled for January 6.

### SAVE THE DATE

It's an offer you should not refuse! Real men, doing real life, with real challenges, through a real God. 2016 Men's Retreat coming soon! January 22-23, 2016 at Camp Vesper Point, with Pastor Pirschel as the speaker. Cost \$65 per man, \$100 maximum per family, a great opportunity for families of men. Open to High School freshman and older. Includes two meals and snacks.

### READ-THRU-THE-BIBLE THIS YEAR

Take the opportunity this year to read through the scripture in one year individually or with your family. The material to aid you is available now at the Welcome Center.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Pastor Pirschel is teaching a combined Sunday School class, including the youth, in the Sanctuary, January 10, January 17, and January 24. This will be *A Conversation on Corporate Worship*.

### CHRISTMAS CARD STAMPS

Please remember to save those Christmas card stamps. Deposit them in the mailbox by Pastor Mullinax's office. These used stamps are processed and re-sold with all the proceeds going to finance Sunday School curriculum in Latin America.

### BUDGET REPORT

In order to meet budget for 2015, we need \$134,529 in gifts to the general fund by the end of December.

~Dusty Kemp, Treasurer

### YEAR END CONTRIBUTIONS

All end-of-the-year contributions need to be in the church office or postmarked no later than December 31 to be counted as tax-deductible contributions for 2015.

### OFFICE CLOSED

The church office is closed the following days:

Thursday, December 24 - Christmas Eve  
Friday, December 25 - Christmas  
Thursday, December 31 - closing at noon  
Friday, January 1 - New Year's Day

### NO ENEWSLETTER

No eNewsletter will be sent the following days:

Thursday, December 24 - Christmas Eve  
Thursday, December 31 - New Year's Eve

### LOST AND FOUND

The bookcase and stairwell next to the coke machine have filled up with precious items left behind at church. Please be sure to check these two locations for any item you may have misplaced!