



Hope for a weary world

DECEMBER 24, 2023

CHRISTMAS EVE

WILSHIRE BAPTIST CHURCH

Preparing for worship

Each year, 150 to 200 of us bring ornaments to place on our large extended-family Christmas tree. There is one ornament my grandma puts on the tree every year: it's a little ornament in the shape of underwear. It's her reminder to us to always have on a fresh pair.

What in the world am I getting at? This year we have been stretched, we have been torn, we have been found with some holes within us. We are waiting for and expecting some freshness or newness in our lives and are holding onto hope that it will come. We're holding onto hope that something different than what we see daily — something more important, something infinitely greater and more powerful — is taking place.

I love when the angels proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

For 600 years people were waiting for the messiah, coming year after year to the temple, the place where heaven and earth meet. Year after year, it didn't seem like it was happening. Year after year. They were stretched and torn, but the promised new life didn't show up.

But now angels reflect and sing, now prophecies are coming true, now life is born into the world and now hope has come.

Christian hope is found in the coming of God. Being ready for this future that God is bringing requires us to let go of the past as our template for hope, to let go of that which has been torn, holey and stretched — and that is hard! It is human nature to hold on and not let go. We want to be comfortable; we don't want to be challenged.

As theologian Jürgen Moltmann once stated, “The future is God's proper mode of being.” In other words, we honor God best when we embrace with faith what God is doing, even if we don't know precisely what that is at any given moment. Christian hope is rooted in God's promise that our redemption is drawing near. God is coming, even amid our brokenness. Y'all, that's hope for a weary world.

—*Timothy Peoples*



4316 Abrams Road | Dallas, Texas 75214 | 214-452-3100 | wilshirebc.org

Building a Community of Faith Shaped by the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Partnered with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Member, Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2023
4:00 p.m.
(For 11 p.m. service, see page 7)

Chiming of the Hour

The people of Wilshire gather today to worship God. In order for this service to be focused upon that purpose, please silence all electronic devices.

Welcome to Worshipers

Timothy Peoples

Prelude

Angels We Have Heard on High
Katherine Pottkotter, organ

arr. Alfred V. Fedak

+Processional Carol 103

O Come, All Ye Faithful

ADESTE FIDELIS

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Elias, Steven and Samantha Cury-Frederick

Christ Candle Litany

Heather Mustain

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. ... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:2-7)

People: Joy to the world! The Lord is come!

Leader: As we light the Christ Candle tonight, we pray its flame provokes us toward greater awareness of the comforting, enlightening presence of God, now and forever in our midst — with and for us.

People: Joy to the world! The Lord is come!

Leader: Tonight is the night! God, grace us with hearts joyfully receptive to this surprising gift of salvation — the Ancient of Days cooing in a lowly manger. A light for revelation to the Gentiles, for glory to Israel and for hope to all creation!

People: Joy to the world! The Lord is come!

+All congregants who are able are invited to stand.
Hearing devices are available in the Narthex and South Atrium.

Ana Boyd, Alice Boyd, Nicolette Brindle, Crosby Cole, Elijah Cole, Elton Cole,
Wilson Cole, Henry Crissey, Hugh Crissey, Birdie Lyons, Odin Lyons, Tess McNicholas,
June McNicholas, Annie Murray, Drew Murray, Jimmie Mustain, Owen Reavis,
Vera Scheuermann, Stella Scheuermann, Emily Skinner

Carol 110

Away in a Manger

MUELLER

+Gospel Story — Luke 2:1–7

Julie Girards

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guest room.

Musical Meditation

Child in the Manger
Colman Vigil and Julian Vigil

Traditional

Child in the manger, infant of Mary;
outcast and stranger, Lord of all;
Child who inherits all our transgressions,
all our wrongdoings on him fall.

Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder;
angels behold him on his throne;
worthy our Savior of all our praises;
happy forever are his own.

Niño en pesebre infante de María,
desconocido, Dios de amor;
Niño que perdona nuestros pecados;
Todas las faltas caen en el.

Christmas Prayer

Darren DeMent

Christmas Blessing

Timothy Peoples

Musical Meditation

O Holy Night
Audrey Pottkotter, soprano
Amy Pottkotter, piano

Adolphe Adam

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Til he appear'd and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born. O night divine.

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wise men from the Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.

He knows our need, to our weakness no stranger;
Behold your King! Before the lowly bend!

Truly he taught us to love one another;
His law is love and his gospel is peace.
Chains shall he break for the prisoner is our brother;
And in his name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise his holy name.

Christ is the Lord, then ever, ever praise we,
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim.

+Gospel Story — Luke 2:8–16

Katie Murray

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
For the Word of God among us,
And for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Sharing the Light

The pastor will take the flame from the Christ Candle, pass it to those who were baptized or joined Wilshire this year, and they will share the light throughout the congregation. With the lighted candle upright, share the light with your neighbor with the simple blessing, “The Light of the World.”

Carol 124

The First Nowell
Stanzas 1, 2 and 4

THE FIRST NOWELL

Carol

Silent Night, Holy Night

STILLE NACHT

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child! Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

+Silent night, holy night, wondrous *star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.

*Raise candles here.

Benediction

Timothy Peoples

+Recessional Carol

Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come

ANTIOCH

Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders of his love.

Postlude

Toccata on ANTIOCH

arr. Jeff Brummel

As you leave the Sanctuary tonight, offerings may be placed in the offering receptacles to provide support for the Palestine Children's Relief Fund.



Connect with Wilshire. Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to make a financial contribution, fill out our online guest card or submit a prayer request. You may also use the response card or offering envelope found in the pew rack. These items can be placed in the offering plate or in one of the secure offering boxes located near the exits.

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2023
11:00 p.m.

Chiming of the Hour

The people of Wilshire gather this evening to worship God. In order for this service to be focused upon that purpose, please silence all electronic devices.

Welcome to Worshipers Timothy Peoples

Prelude *Swiss Noel* Louis-Claude Daquin

Opening Sentences Geri McKenzie

We gather tonight to hear the message of the prophets, the song of the angels, the reports of the shepherds and the witness of history. Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. Let all the world keep silence tonight as we gather to adore the child born in Bethlehem, who is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being. Hear how the heavens start to whisper. Listen.

+Processional Carol 103 *O Come, All Ye Faithful* ADESTE FIDELES

Lighting the Christ Candle Monica Mullins

Preparing for the Nativity Katherine Pottkotter

Christ Candle Litany Heather Mustain

Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined. ... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:2-7)

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Leader: Tonight is the night! God, grace us with hearts joyfully receptive to this surprising gift of salvation — the Ancient of Days cooing in a lowly manger. A light for revelation to the Gentiles, for glory to Israel and for hope to all creation!

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Reading — Micah 5:2–5a

Carol Cabaniss

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Carol 132

It Came upon the Midnight Clear
Stanzas 1 and 4

CAROL

Gospel Reading — Luke 1:26–38

Katie Murray

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Christmas Prayer

Darren DeMent

Gospel Reading — Luke 2:1–7

Julie Girards

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guest room.

Anthem*Et in terra pax*

John Purifoy

Student Alumni Youth Choir
Kamilya Akhmetova, accompanist

Et in terra pax, and on earth, peace.
Gloria in excelsis! Glory to God in the highest!
Et in terra pax, and on earth, peace.
Gloria in excelsis Deo!

And suddenly with the angel there was a multitude
of the heavenly host praising God and saying:
“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace.”
Et in terra pax, and on earth, peace.

Carol 111*Away in a Manger*

CRADLE SONG

Gospel Story — Luke 2:8–16

Carolyn Murray

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

Solo

O Holy Night
Audrey Pottkotter, soprano
Amy Pottkotter, piano

Adolphe Adam

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Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
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For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born. O night divine.

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by his cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wise men from the Orient land.
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.

He knows our need, to our weakness no stranger;
Behold your King! Before the lowly bend!

Truly he taught us to love one another;
His law is love and his gospel is peace.
Chains shall he break for the prisoner is our brother;
And in his name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
Let all within us praise his holy name.

Christ is the Lord, then ever, ever praise we,
His pow'r and glory evermore proclaim.

Christmas Homily

Timothy Peoples

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

All worshipers are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper by intinction. The congregation will be invited to come forward by rows. As you come forward, open your hands and the minister will place the bread in your hand. You will then dip your bread in the chalice and partake. Please exit the pew to your left and return on the aisle to your right. All followers of Christ are welcome at the Lord's Table.

The Communion bread is gluten-free.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. ... He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
For the Word of God among us,
And for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Sharing the Light

The pastor will take the flame from the Christ Candle, pass it to those who were baptized or joined Wilshire this year, and they, along with other worship leaders, will share the light throughout the congregation. With the lighted candle upright, share the light with your neighbor with the simple blessing, “The Light of the World.”

Carol

Silent Night, Holy Night

STILLE NACHT

**Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

**+Silent night, holy night, wondrous *star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born**

*Raise candles here.

Benediction

Timothy Peoples

**Joy to the world! The Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room,
And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
And wonders, wonders of his love.**

Postlude

Toccata on ANTIOCH

arr. Jeff Brummel

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Staff contacts

Phone numbers: 214-452- followed by extension shown below. **Email addresses:** first letter of first name and full last name followed by @wilshirebc.org (example: tpeoples@wilshirebc.org). Staff members without phone extensions do not have Wilshire email addresses.

Communications

- Mark McKenzie, Communications Director (3169)

Congregational Care

- Barbara Clayton, Pastoral Care Assistant (3125)
- Linda Garner, Parish Nurse (3151)
- Carolyn Murray, Coordinator of Congregational Life (3170)
- Heather Mustain, Associate Pastor (3110)

Early Childhood Learning Center

- Kelly Akins, Assistant Director and Curriculum Specialist (3139)
- Ramona Randle, Director (3140)

Finance

- Lori Gooden, Director of Finance (3131)

Food Services

- Luke Munion, Food Service Staff
- Haley Robinson, Food Service Director (3117)
- Gillian Tinsley, Food Service Staff
- Elias Vasquez, Food Service Staff
- Leyvi Vasquez, Food Service Staff
- Wilfredo Velasquez-Cruz, Food Service Staff

Hospitality & Facilities

- Maricela Escutia, Facilities Supervisor
- Holly Irvin, Director of Hospitality (3150)
- Daniel Latin, Facilities
- Leticia Medina, Facilities
- Kevin Sierra, Facilities
- Leticia Vega, Facilities
- Glenda Williams, Receptionist (3165)

Missions & Advocacy

- Abbey Adcox, Missions and Advocacy Coordinator (3127)
- Heather Mustain, Associate Pastor (3110)

Music & Worship

- Jeff Brummel, Associate Minister of Music/Organist (3122)
- Charlie Fuller, Interim Minister of Music (3123)
- Shana Gaines, Wilshire Winds Director (3163)
- Ralph Manuel, Handbell Coordinator (3161)
- Candy McComb, Children's Choir Coordinator (3124)

Operations & Technology

- Rene Altamirano, Maintenance Technician
- Merik Gillett, Operations Director (3146)
- Eric Mirochna, IT Manager (3136)

Pathways to Ministry

- John Kelly, McIver Fellow (3156)
- George Mason, Pathways to Ministry Alumni Director and Senior Pastor Emeritus (3133)

Senior Pastor

- Debby Burton, Executive Assistant (3132)
- Geri McKenzie, Executive Director of Administration (3159)
- Timothy Peoples, Senior Pastor (3132)

Spiritual Formation

- Carol Cabaniss, Spiritual Formation Coordinator (3106)
- Darren DeMent, Associate Pastor (3102)
- Julie Girards, Minister to Children (3104)
- Staci Langley, Childcare Coordinator
- Katie Murray, Minister to Senior Adults (3129)
- Barbara Peterson, Librarian (3114)

Tapestry



News & Announcements
December 24, 2023

Ariel Merivil called as Wilshire minister of music



In a special business meeting after worship last Sunday, Dec. 17, the members of Wilshire voted to call Ariel Merivil as our next minister of music. We anticipate a mid-February start for Ariel, who will move to Dallas from Lincoln, Nebraska, where he has served First-Plymouth Congregational Church as associate minister of music since 2017.

“What a blessing it was to be with Wilshire last weekend,” Ariel said. “I feel so grateful to have met so many wonderful members and share in worship alongside the congregation! God is moving at Wilshire, and I am looking forward to the deep work in ministry we have together.”

The vote was the culmination of a Call Weekend during which Ariel participated in three open meet and greet sessions, rehearsed with Sanctuary Choir and met with staff and the Minister of Music Search Committee. During worship, Ariel sang a solo, led congregational singing and directed Sanctuary Choir.

The Search Committee said in a statement, “We are grateful for God’s leadership through this process and want to thank the congregation for your support, prayers and patience during the past eight months. Please continue to pray for Ariel as he leaves Lincoln and moves to Dallas. Exciting days are ahead for Wilshire!”



Sundays: Worship at 11 a.m. Sunday School for all ages at 9:45 a.m. Our service livestreams at youtube.com/wilshirebaptist and at wilshirebc.org/worship/livestream. Keep up with Wilshire by subscribing to our YouTube channel and following us on Facebook and Instagram.

Worship only on Dec. 31

Next Sunday, Dec. 31, Wilshire will not meet for Sunday School but will gather for worship at 11 a.m.

Office closed week of Christmas

The church office will be closed and staff members will be on vacation from Monday, Dec. 25, through Tuesday, Jan. 2. In addition, the staff will be offsite for a retreat on Wednesday, Jan. 3. If you have an urgent pastoral need during this time, contact Senior Pastor Timothy Peoples at 214-452-3171 or tpeoples@wilshirebc.org.

Year-end giving

■ While the church office will be closed the week of Christmas, checks can be dropped into the secure black mailbox accessible from the south parking lot. Checks in the mailbox will be retrieved in time to count as 2023 giving.

■ Checks sent through the mail need to be postmarked by Dec. 29.

■ Stock gifts will be received until Dec. 29. Email Lori Gooden at lgooden@wilshirebc.org for account information and to let her know about the gift.

January start dates

■ **Wednesday Night Live** will resume on Jan. 10 after a holiday break. This includes Koinonia Café; Preschool Music, Missions and More; Kid-Connect; Watershed; and Sanctuary Choir.

■ **Lunch & Learn** is moving to a weekly schedule and will also resume Jan. 10.

■ **Children's and Youth Choir** rehearsals will resume Sunday, Jan. 14.

Author fair to be held Jan. 14

Come browse and buy titles from more than two dozen church member authors at the first ever Wilshire Author Fair on Sunday, Jan. 14, from noon to 2 p.m. in Community Hall. Titles span a wide range of genres and topics: short fiction and novels; stories for children; and nonfiction including music, poetry, memoirs, culture, lifestyle, devotionals, photography, recipes, heritage, sermons, self-help and biblical commentary.

MLK Meal Packing Event, Jan. 15



Join us on the MLK Day holiday, Monday, Jan. 15, as we again partner with Rise Against Hunger to pack healthy meals for those in need. The event will be held from 10 a.m. to noon in Community

Hall. Our goal is to pack 15,120 meals. This project is for everyone, with opportunities to serve while seated and while standing. Children are a great help collecting completed bags with help from a parent. Volunteers are needed to help set up starting at 8:30 a.m. and clean up afterward. Rise Against Hunger's mission is to create immediate and long-term solutions to hunger by building resilience, self-sufficiency and empowerment in communities worldwide. Please sign up via the link at wilshirebc.org/events/mlk-meals.

Puerto Rico trip planned

Wilshire will return to Puerto Rico for a mission trip from Feb. 24 to March 2, 2024. Wilshire member Monica Mullins will lead the group, which will partner with First Baptist of Rio Piedras in San Juan. Project details will be announced soon, but no experience is necessary. The cost of the trip will be \$350 to \$400, plus airfare. If you're interested in going or have questions, contact Abbey Adcox at aadcox@wilshirebc.org.

End of year need: \$331,245

Each month the full Wilshire staff gathers in Community Hall for lunch and an activity. It has become a time to better know those we work and prepare worship with. Activities have ranged from a “Chopped”-style dessert challenge to building towers with marshmallows and toothpicks. My favorite activity split them into five teams with one mission: find something around the building that defines Wilshire and bring it back for show and tell. The teams had 10 minutes to discuss and search.

They quickly returned with their objects, ready to share with the large group. One team shared a photo of the baptistery tapestry. Another team found a copy of the bylaws and discussed the decisions of the past that had created an open and inclusive community for all. Daniel Latin carried down the huge Bible from the Communion table and talked about living out the word of God. Rene Altamirano shared a picture of Choral Hall and told how almost every day he takes his lunch there, feeling the presence of music and the Holy Spirit. The last group’s spokesperson was Maricela Escutia. Her team showed the all-member photo taken in the Sanctuary. Maricela said, “What best describes who Wilshire is and how the mission of Wilshire is carried out is through the people — their love and desire to share the Spirit of God in the world in ways only they can. It’s the people!”

This message is not meant to be self-congratulatory or only focus on an insular model of church. But Maricela is right. There are

churches up and down Abrams that any of you could attend, yet you choose to be part of Wilshire Baptist Church. As one theologian put it, “We don’t build the kingdom of God. We announce it. We seek it. We receive it. We bear witness to it. We build for it. God builds it.” We as Wilshire have chosen to announce, seek, receive and bear witness to the kingdom of God in unique and holy ways. It is through the people being completely open to discerning where the Spirit is moving, grabbing hold and moving with it. Wilshire’s vision and mission continue to be

“to become a bold witness to the way of Christ in our time” and “to build a community of faith shaped by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Both call us outside our comfort zones and even these walls.

By giving, we are taking what we have to accomplish our God-given mission, individually and together, in our congregation. As Christian stewards we align our lives and ministries with God’s intentions for God’s world. Consider how you can give to sustain and continue the work we are doing together.

Grace, Peace and Love.

—Timothy Peoples

Watch this space each week as we decorate the tree to show our progress closing the gap between our 2023 budget and actual giving. For more about giving, visit wilshirebc.org/give.

GOAL: \$967,326



**\$636,081
GIVEN**