



Keep Watch

**DECEMBER 1, 2024
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
WILSHIRE BAPTIST CHURCH**

Preparing for worship

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, which traditionally focuses on hope. Each time we come to this Sunday, I'm reminded that I'm not the most hopeful about our world. I know, I know, that's not the way to see the world or come into the season of Advent. Life just seems to be a constant downer with news headlines, new legislation, false and prosperity gospels — the list of reasons for my pessimism goes on and on.

But this is when I must step back, take a breath and remember the world is not in my hands. I think the creators of the Advent season knew to put hope first. (Yes, some traditions do things differently, but let me have this moment.) Maybe they knew of Novembers like the one we just had, filled with political fury, a rising number of white supremacist incidents and talks of mass deportations. Maybe they, with tears in their eyes, knew the world would be feeling a tad bit hopeless and lacking the morals and principles of Christ, and yelled out to us:

*Comfort, comfort ye my people,
Speak ye peace, thus saith our God.
Comfort those who sit in darkness,
Mourning neath their sorrows' load.
Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them ...*

There is hope in those words!

Our Advent theme this year, “Keep Watch,” was inspired by the book *Keep Watch with Me*. One of the authors, Michael McRay, writes, “Many of us yearn for a better world, and we wonder how long we can wait. Advent is all about waiting. It is about patience, expectation, and longing. We wait in hope for the arrival of something better than what we have now. ... But Advent is about ache too, because longing and waiting are also painful experiences. For our exiled friends in prison longing for freedom, for our oppressed [siblings] waiting for justice, for our loved ones on the streets dreaming of a warm home, waiting is agony. Both Advent and peacemaking are experiences of hope, and hope is the stuff of survival. We hope that something more beautiful is coming because we must, because the alternative is unbearable.”

So, let us keep watch for hope — because we must!

—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

Sunday, December 1, 2014

11:00 a.m.

First Sunday of Advent

Chiming of the Hour

We gather in community this morning to worship God.
To help center our focus in worship, please silence all electronic devices.

Welcome to Worshipers

Timothy Peoples

Prelude

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

arr. Gilbert M. Martin

+Processional Song

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
No. 79
Stanzas 1–3

VENI EMMANUEL

Lighting the Candle of Hope

Ryan, Kristin, Alice and Ana Boyd

Preparing for the Nativity

Elle Catarella, Miles Catarella, June McNicholas,
Annie Murray, Drew Murray, Emily Skinner

+A Moment of Hope

Charlotte Bruster

Leader: Let us keep watch, ready to hear God's voice in these sacred days.

All: In the noise and rush of our lives, we yearn to hear your word of peace.

Leader: Truth comes not to the proud, but to those who listen with humble hearts.

All: Grant us patience to be still, grace to give freely, and wisdom to listen deeply.

Leader: The Lord is present in this holy place. Let all creation fall silent before the Divine.

All: In stillness we wait, in trust we remain unafraid.

Leader: Rejoice, daughter of Zion! The Lord comes to dwell among you, banishing all fear.

All: Let every living soul be silent before the Holy One.

—Adapted from *Calling All Angels* by Erin Wathen

+All congregants are invited to stand in body or spirit.
Hearing devices are available in the Narthex and South Atrium.

**O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease; fill all the world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!**

Psalm Reading — Psalm 25:1-10

Ariel Merivil

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!
Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore God instructs sinners in the way.
God leads the humble in what is right
and teaches the humble God's way.
All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep God's covenant and decrees.

Prayers of the People

Charlie Fuller

Silence

We pause in silence to reflect and to be attentive to the Spirit of God.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.**

There is a yearning in hearts weighed down by ancient grief and centuries of sorrow.
 There is a yearning in hearts that in the darkness hide
 And in the shades of death abide, a yearning for tomorrow.

There is a yearning, a yearning for the promised one, the first-born of creation.
 There is a yearning for the Lord who visited his own,
 And by his death for sin atoned, to bring to us salvation.

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.

There is a yearning that fills the hearts of those who wait the day of his appearing.
 There is a yearning when all our sorrows are erased
 And we shall see the one who placed within our hearts the yearning.

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, within our hearts, the yearning.

+Gospel Reading — Luke 21:25-36

Kristen Rice

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Then he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

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!

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Maggie Morey

All followers of Christ are invited to partake of the Lord's Supper, whether you are a Wilshire member or not. The bread used this morning is gluten free.

Passing of the Bread

Love Came Down at Christmas

GARTAN



1. Love came down at Christ - mas, Love all love - ly, — Love di - vine; _____
2. Wor - ship we the God - head, Love in - car - nate, Love di - vine; _____
3. Love shall be our to - ken; love be yours and love be mine; _____



Love was born at Christ - mas; star and an - gel — gave the sign.
wor - ship we our Je - sus, but where - with for — sa - cred sign?
love to God and oth - ers, love for plea and — gift and sign.

Passing of the Cup

'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime

arr. Franklin D. Ashdown

Passing of the Peace

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

+Congregational Song

Arise, Your Light Is Come
No. 87

FESTAL SONG

Sharing of Decisions

Maggie Morey

Benediction

Maggie Morey

Postlude

Variations on an Ancient French Carol

Alexandre Guilmant

Meet today's worship leaders

Kristin and Ryan Boyd joined Wilshire in 2017. Their two daughters are **Alice**, a third grader, and **Ana**, a first grader. Kristin and Ryan are members of Labyrinth Class, and Kristin serves on the Building and Grounds Committee.

Charlotte Bruster and her husband, Bill, joined Wilshire in 2000 and are members of Compass Class. Charlotte is a deacon and serves on the Hospitality Ministry Team. She and Bill have two adult children and three grandchildren.

Kristen Rice joined Wilshire in 2003. Her two sons are Eric, a fifth grader, and E.J., a fourth grader. Kristen's parents, Margaret and Gene Rice, also attend Wilshire. Kristen is a children's choir leader and a frequent volunteer for Wilshire's summer camps for children. She is the founder and executive director of Color Me Empowered, a nonprofit dedicated to equitable access to the arts.



We're glad you're here. If you're a guest today and would like to let us know, please scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to access our online response card. You can also scan the code to make a financial contribution or submit a prayer request. Response cards and offering envelopes are available in the pew racks and can be placed in the offering plate or offering boxes.

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 with phone extensions 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

- Carole McClung, ECLC Administrative Assistant (3115)
- Ramona Randle, ECLC Director (3140)

Finance

- Lori Gooden, Director of Finance (3131)

Food Services

- Haley Garcia, Food Service Director (3117)
- Luke Munion, Food Service Staff
- Gillian Tinsley, Food Service Staff
- Wilfredo Velasquez-Cruz, Food Service Staff

Hospitality and Facilities

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

Missions and Advocacy

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

Music and Worship

- Jeff Brummel, Associate Minister of Music/Organist (3122)
- Carol Cabaniss, Music and Worship Coordinator (3106)
- Shana Gaines, Wilshire Winds Director (3163)
- Ralph Manuel, Handbell Coordinator (3161)
- Candy McComb, Children's Choir Coordinator (3124)
- Ariel Merivil, Minister of Music (3135)

Operations and Technology

- Rene Altamirano, Maintenance Technician
- Bryant Greer, Building Operations Manager (3146)
- Jim Tapley, Audio and Video Coordinator

Pathways to Ministry

- Debby Burton, Pathways to Ministry Assistant (3158)
- Charlie Fuller, Pathways to Ministry Director and Coach in Residence (3123)
- George Mason, Senior Pastor Emeritus and Pathways to Ministry Alumni Director (3133)
- Georgia McKee, Pastoral Resident (3152)
- Maggie Morey, Pastoral Resident (3153)

Senior Pastor

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

Spiritual Formation

- Kelly Akins, Minister to Preschoolers (3139)
- Becky Bridges, Spiritual Formation Coordinator (3130)
- Darren DeMent, Associate Pastor (3102)
- Julie Girards, Minister to Children (3104)
- Katie Murray, Minister to Senior Adults (3129)
- Barbara Peterson, Librarian (3114)

Tapestry



News & Announcements
December 1, 2024



Film, Q&A Monday night

Wilshire members and guests are invited to the Angelika Film Center for a special screening of the documentary *Rising Hope* on Monday, Dec. 2, at 7 p.m.



The film will be followed by a Q&A with director Theo Avgerinos and Jason Coker, president of Together for Hope, a nonprofit agency featured in the film. Jason is a former minister of missions at Wilshire.

Rising Hope (risinghopefilm.com) tells the story of a Mississippi Delta community where hope survives despite generational poverty. The film has won awards at festivals in Washington, D.C., San Francisco and Mississippi.

Admission is donation-based, with a suggested donation of \$10.



Space is limited. Scan the QR code or visit givebutter.com/RisingHopeDallas to RSVP.



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.



Like the shepherds who kept watch over their flock, we too want to keep watch this Advent season. In a time when our public life feels polarized and uncertain, how do we keep watch for one another? As we move through the weeks of Advent, is it possible for us to keep watch for moments of hope, joy, peace and love? In this season of great anticipation, may the eyes of our hearts be open as we keep watch for God's continual love and presence to us and the world. wilshirebc.org/advent



Order Sanctuary poinsettias by today

Help decorate the Sanctuary for Advent by ordering a poinsettia in honor or in memory of a loved one. Dedications will be listed in the Dec. 8 worship folder. Each plant costs \$14, and donors may take them home after Christmas Eve services. Order by Dec. 1 in the church office or online at wilshirebc.org/poinsettias.



Visit the Giving Tree

Select a tag from the Giving Tree in James Gallery and fulfill a Christmas wish for a child or adult served by one of our local mission partners. Due dates vary by agency. Scan your tag's QR code and we'll send you a due-date reminder. We also have a **Virtual Giving Tree**; find the link at wilshirebc.org/giving-tree.

Celebration of the Green next Sunday

Sunday, Dec. 8 | 6:30 p.m. | Sanctuary | In this annual favorite event, themed *Comfort! Comfort Now, My People. Tell of Peace!*, the Christmas story will come alive through music and narration, offering a timeless message of peace and the assurance that “all will be well.” Featuring Wilshire Winds, Carillon Ringers, Children’s Choir, Youth Choir, Shekinah, Nova and Sanctuary Choir. A reception will follow.

Sign up kids to build nativity scene

Children are invited to help build the Sanctuary nativity scene by carrying elements to the chancel at the start of worship. We’ll begin Dec. 1 and build the scene week by week until it is complete at the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve service. Sign up at wilshirebc.org/nativity.

Adventurers Christmas lights tour

Tuesday, Dec. 10 | 6 p.m. |

Join the Wilshire Adventurers for a guided bus tour of Christmas lights in Highland Park. \$40 per person. Register at wilshirebc.org/events/christmas-lights. Adventurers is a fellowship group for those 60 and above.

Advent book study

All are invited to participate as we collectively read *Calling All Angels: an Advent Study of Fearlessness and Strength* by Erin Wathen. The book examines four angelic encounters that began with the same refrain, “do not be afraid,”



and challenges readers to apply this timeless message to our lives today. The book is available from major book retailers.

■ On Sundays from 9 to 9:45 a.m., Darren DeMent and Katie Murray will lead a **discussion group** on the book in Room 1205-G. Starts Dec. 1.

■ Many **Sunday School** classes, including Youth, will study the book during Advent.

■ A **family study guide** is available for parents to use with children. Pick up a copy in the main office or near the north entrance.

Give a Hope Box for Christmas

Give a unique gift and support a Wilshire mission partner with a Hope Box from Together for Hope, which fights rural poverty through education, health, housing and social enterprise. Each box contains culinary products produced by TFH partners. Purchase at koinoniafarmstore.com/together-for-hope-box.



Christmas pageant

Wednesday, Dec. 11 | 6 p.m. | Sanctuary | Kindergarten, Pre-K and 3-Year-Old choirs will be in costume as they sing and act out the Nativity. Join us after the program for cookies and cocoa in James Gallery.

Parents Night Out

Friday, Dec. 13 | 6:30 p.m. | Wilshire will offer free childcare (infants–grade 5) on the night many adult classes have Christmas parties. Space is limited. Register at wilshirebc.org/events/pno-dec13 by Dec. 8.

Christmas Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 24

■ 4 p.m. Christmas Eve family service. Suitable for all ages.

■ 11 p.m. Christmas Eve liturgical service. Includes celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Note: No Sunday School (worship only) on Dec. 29.

Pop-up mission project on Dec. 4

If you're in the building on Wednesday, Dec. 4, stop by the tables in James Gallery and spend a few minutes assembling Holiday cutlery packs for mission partner Cornerstone Baptist Church's Community Kitchen. Supplies will be available from noon to 7:45 p.m. Contact: Abbey Adcox (aadcox@wilshirebc.org)

Wilshire Welcome is Dec. 8

Wilshire Welcome, a one-hour session to help guests and new members learn more about the church, will meet Sunday, Dec. 8, at 9:45 a.m. in the Prayer Room near the chapel. Contact: Carolyn Murray (cmurray@wilshirebc.org)

Advocacy Action Groups



The 89th Texas Legislature and 119th U.S. Congress convene in January. Consider joining an Advocacy Action Group to receive educational resources and action alerts regarding local, state and national issues. From the Missions and Christian Advocacy Committee.



■ **Brown Bag Book Club** | Dec. 5 | Noon | 1205-L | *Good Night, Irene* by Luis Alberto Urrea. Contact: Carolyn Murray (cmurray@wilshirebc.org)

■ **Tuesday Evening Book Club** | Dec. 10 | 6:30 p.m. | Parlor | *The Deal of a Lifetime* by Fredrik Backman. Contact: Debby Burton (dburton@wilshirebc.org)

■ **Take a Hike: Holiday Edition** | Dec. 14 | 8:30 a.m. | NorthPark Center | Loop the mall and then grab breakfast.



Wednesday, Dec. 4

All are invited the first and third Wednesdays every month for lunch (\$10 ea.) and Bible study. On Dec. 4, Associate Pastor Heather Mustain will teach on 2 Samuel 11-12. See the schedule at wilshirebc.org/events/lunch-learn.



THANKSGIVING GENEROSITY

Thanks to strong participation in our 2024 Thanksgiving Food Drives, Wilshire donated 105 meal boxes to the Wilkinson Center and 1,302 pounds of food for the food pantry at White Rock Center of Hope.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE DECEMBER 4

Koinonia Café

5 p.m. | **Community Hall** | Buffet dinner. Cash/check/credit accepted. See prices at wilshirebc.org/events/wnl. **Dec. 4:** Roasted chicken with lemon butter sauce, orzo, spanakopita, hummus and pita, vegetable soup, salad, lemon bars, honey cookies, jello.
Kids: Grilled chicken and buttered pasta.

Preschool Music & Missions

6 p.m. | **Age 3–Pre-K** | Preschool choir plus fun activities and lessons focused on God’s love and caring for others.

KidConnect

6 p.m. | **K–Grade 5** | A rotation of activities to help kids learn how to love God and others with every part of themselves. Activities include art, music, recreation and more. Kindergartners will have choir as part of KidConnect.

Watershed

6:30 p.m. | **Grades 6–12** | Wilshire Student Ministry’s weekly time of Bible study and music in the Youth Center.

Sanctuary Choir

7 p.m. | **Choral Hall** | New singers are always welcome in our main adult choir. No audition.

Resident-Led Vespers



6 p.m. | **McIver Chapel** | Led by our two pastoral residents, this Advent-themed worship service will take the form of a Moravian Lovefeast, a traditional service of music and readings with no homily.

Coming next Wednesday

On the final Wednesday Night Live of the year, we’ll have **Koinonia Café** as usual, but in lieu of other 6 p.m. events, all are invited to the **Preschool Christmas Pageant** in the Sanctuary. A reception with cookies and cocoa will follow in James Gallery.

WNL: Virtual Edition on Dec. 11

Those who engage with Wilshire primarily online are invited to a Zoom session led by Associate Pastor Darren DeMent on Dec. 11 at 6 p.m. Central. Find the link at wilshirebc.org/events/wnl-virtual closer to the event.

■ *No Wednesday Night Live on Dec. 18, Dec. 25 or Jan. 1. WNL resumes Jan. 8.*

Childcare is offered from 6 to 7:15 p.m. for infants to 2-year-olds with parents involved in church activities.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING

Your gifts are changing lives inside and outside our walls. Here are some ways to make a financial contribution to Wilshire.

ONLINE. Set up a recurring or one-time gift charged to your debit or credit card or as an ACH from your checking account. Get started at wilshirebc.org/give.

REALM CONNECT APP. Easily make gifts and see past giving on your mobile device. Available at your device's app store. Find download links at wilshirebc.org/realms.

AUTOMATIC BANK PAY. Visit your bank's website and set up Wilshire as a payee. The bank will send the church a check.

MAIL. Send to Finance Director Lori Gooden's attention at Wilshire.

TEXT. Text WILSHIRE and a dollar amount (ex: WILSHIRE 50) to 73256.

DONATE STOCKS. Contact Lori to learn how to donate appreciated stocks.

FROM YOUR IRA. For those over 70.5 years old, tax-free IRA gifts offer a financial benefit and may reduce future tax burdens.



Scan code with your smartphone camera to make an electronic contribution.

At Wilshire, we use a one-fund approach to giving called the Unified Budget. Your gifts support the basic mission, ministry and operations of the church. Once the Unified Budget is fulfilled, gifts overflow into visionary aspects of our mission.

This Week

Sunday, Dec. 1

- Advent Book Discussion, 1205-G, 9 a.m.
- Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
- Worship, Sanctuary, 11 a.m.
- Children's Choir Snack Lunch, 2221, noon
- Youth Choir Snack Lunch, Youth Center, noon
- Children's Choir, 12:30 p.m.
- Youth Choir, Choral Hall, 12:30 p.m.
- Shekinah, Choral Hall, 1:30 p.m.
- Carillon Ringers, Handbell room, 2:15 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 2

- Wilshire Winds, Choral Hall, 7 p.m.
- *Rising Hope* screening, Angelika Film Center (Mockingbird Station), 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 3

- Stephen Ministry Supervision/CE, 1205-G, 1205-L, Parlor, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 4

- New Song, Choral Hall, 9:30 a.m.
- Lunch & Learn, Community Hall, 11:30 a.m.
- Mission Project: Cornerstone Cutlery Packs, James Gallery, noon
- Koinonia Café, Community Hall, 5 p.m.
- Preschool Music & Missions, 6 p.m.
- KidConnect, 6 p.m.
- Vespers, McIver Chapel, 6 p.m.
- WSM Watershed, Youth Center, 6:30 p.m.
- Risk Management Committee, 1205-G, 6:45 p.m.
- Sanctuary Choir, Choral Hall, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 5

- Brown Bag Book Club, 1205-L, noon
- Knit Unto Others, Parlor, 1:30 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 6

- MomCo, Community Hall, 9 a.m.

Saturday, Dec. 7

- Nova, Choral Hall, Sanctuary, 9:30 a.m.
- Open Bible Christmas Party, James Gallery, 11 a.m.

Jane Alloway

Hometown: Dallas

Present City: Dallas

Education: Texas Tech University

Profession: Retail; store manager, Lord & Taylor; 30 years as district manager, Gap, Banana Republic and Victoria's Secret

Tell us about your family.

My father and mother joined Wilshire in 1957. They had just moved to Dallas, and their pastor in Atlanta told them about Wilshire. They visited Wilshire and loved it. I was 2 with my twin brother John. My sister Paula still attends Sunday School. I have a son, Lindsey, who lives in Manhattan.

Any favorite hobbies?

I love music. I grew up playing my mother's Steinway baby grand piano. I now know what a privilege that was. As an active youth member, I participated in the Youth Choir, including handbells. I love movies and travel.

What are your favorite places to travel?

I'm going to Manhattan for Christmas to visit my son, Lindsey. I also want to go back and travel more in Italy. I believe I could live there. I love the ocean and the beach. I find it very peaceful.

What brought you to Wilshire and when?

I grew up at Wilshire and was very active in the youth group. Pastor Bruce McIver baptized



me. I was one of the first people baptized in the new Sanctuary. I came back to Wilshire in January 2001 and have been active since. I knew the Lord was calling me back to church because I felt I had lost Jane. I was a single mother and a district manager at

work. Wilshire continues to be a very important part of my life.

Where are you engaged at Wilshire?

I loved Companions in Christ. I have been a greeter and usher for 20 years. I served on the lay support team for Pastoral Resident Ann Bell Worley. I was the director of Concordia Class for a long time, and then Rick Hibbs took over.

What do you think God is up to in your life right now?

I felt very close to God when I first got cancer, and then my cancer came back. I was so impressed with how many people reached out to me. Timothy called me several times through my treatments. The church support has been such a blessing. My class has been so loving throughout the process. The church support has been so uplifting to me. I don't think that God is through with me yet.

End of year need: \$727,573

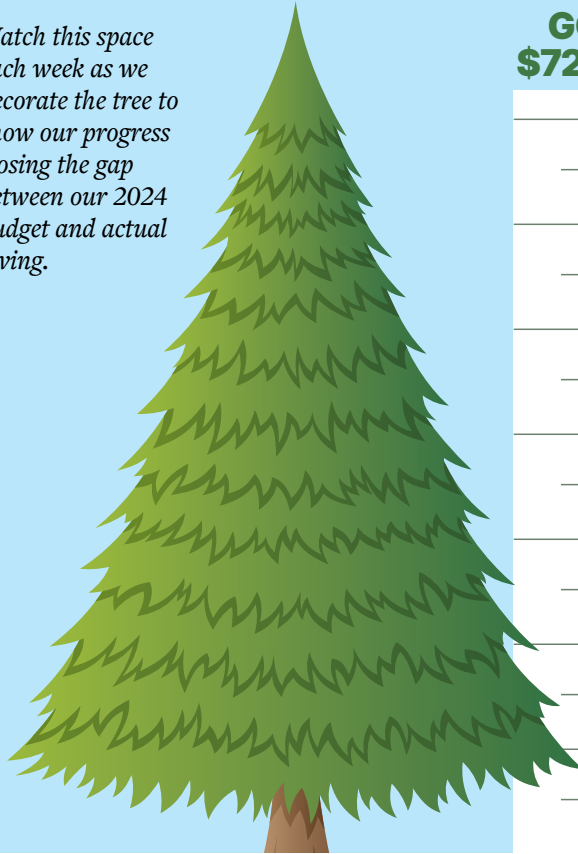
For many of us, Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline" is a favorite. You know the song: "Sweet Caroline/Good times never seemed so good./I've been inclined/To believe they never would."

The song has become an anthem for Boston Red Sox fans at Fenway Park. In 1997, Amy Tobey, an employee in charge of music, first played it as a nod to a friend with a new baby named Caroline. She kept playing it around the eighth inning — but only in games when the home team was winning and the mood was already festive.

A few years later, team exec Charles Steinberg said the song should be played at every game, no matter the score. According to writer Kevin Slane, Steinberg felt the song might have "transformative powers" to lift the spirits of the crowd, even when success wasn't forthcoming.

Like most churches, we're entering the eighth inning of the year behind in our giving. We do a stewardship campaign, which is basically our version of "Sweet Caroline." Through the year, we typically give 75% of the budget in 11 months and enter December needing to give a large amount. As near as I can tell, that has been our pattern for decades. And still, the reality that we need to give \$727,573

Watch this space each week as we decorate the tree to show our progress closing the gap between our 2024 budget and actual giving.



in 31 days feels daunting.

But if I step back from that big number, what I know is that we can do this. And if we each do our part to give gratefully, if we count our blessings and decide to give thanks to the One who blessed us — we will have more than enough. If you have already given all you can for the year, thank you. Your gifts have sustained us and made possible a whole set of new means for delivering ministry to people right where they are. If you have not yet given or can give more, I pray you will do so in the next four weeks. I believe you will find real joy in being a

part of all we are doing together. And I hope you'll find real peace in helping the church enter the coming year on solid ground.

We have a great challenge before us to fully give our budget, but there's a great celebration ahead if we do so. Valerie and I are going to pray about what we can give over and above our tithe to help us get there. Would you do the same thing? As we give, each week we will decorate this tree to show the accomplishing of this good work together.—*Timothy Peoples*

■ For more about giving, visit wilshirebc.org/give or see p. 14.