



Messiah

1999–2024

WELCOME
to the 25th Anniversary Concert Presentation of
George Frideric Handel's

Messiah

PART I: The Christmas Story

produced and presented by
Williamsburg United Methodist Church

Friday, December 6, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 7, 2024, 5:00 p.m.

Rev. Dave Rochford, Senior Pastor
Rev. Meghan Roth-Clayton, Associate Pastor
Lou-Anne Smith, Director of Worship Arts
Thomas Marshall, Organist
Handel Chamber Orchestra & Chorus

Michelle Trovato, Soprano
Cecelia McKinley, Mezzo-Soprano

Ian Lane, Tenor
Branch Fields, Bass

Libretto adapted from Holy Scripture by Charles Jennens (1700-1773)
First performance in Dublin, Ireland
13 April 1742

For information about our church, please contact us: (757) 229-1771 or www.williamsburgumc.org



If George Frideric Handel's father had had his way, millions of people over the last 272 years would not have enjoyed the brilliance of his son's most famous oratorio, *Messiah*, or any of his other musical pieces.

Born in 1685, the young Handel loved music from an early age and wanted to pursue musical studies, but his father objected. The elder Handel would not even allow his son to own a musical instrument. The thinking was that pursuing a musical career would not lead to sufficient income.

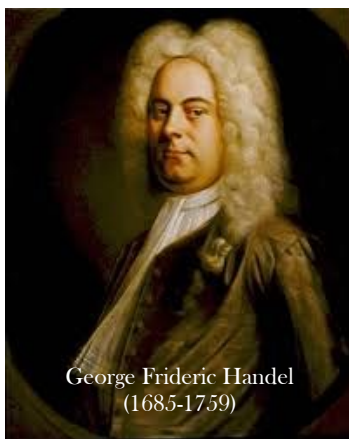
Fortunately, for Handel as well as future generations of music lovers, his mother, Dorothea, supported his musical pursuits and encouraged him to practice without his father's knowledge.

After an organ performance at the age of seven, Handel met composer and organist, Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, who took him on as a pupil. With Zachow's guidance, Handel had mastered composing for the organ, oboe and violin by the time he was 10 years old.

Handel composed various church cantatas and chamber music over an approximately five to six year period, starting at the age of 11, but he finally succumbed to his father's insistence of studying law. By the time he was 18, he dropped his law studies and accepted a violinist's position at the Hamburg Opera's Goosemarket Theater in his native Germany.

Messiah

The Story of George Frideric Handel
by George Watson



However, it was soon his skill on the organ that actually gained him the most attention.

In 1704, at age 19, he composed the first of nearly 50 operas. He went to Italy in 1707 and made his home there for several years composing operas before eventually winding up in London. There in 1711 his breakthrough work, the opera *Rinaldo* was first performed. That gave him the widespread recognition he needed to expand his musical career.

He decided to make London his permanent home in 1726 and became a British citizen. He continued to produce Italian operas but, when they fell out of favor, he turned to oratorios.

He composed some 30 oratorios, the most famous being *Messiah*, which was written in 1741 and first performed in 1742 in Dublin.

Beginning with a stroke in 1737 and another six years later, Handel endured a series of health issues that likely included depression and culminated with total blindness by 1752. Still, none of his health problems kept him from his passion for music.

After his first stroke affected the movement of his right hand, he defied pessimists with a full recovery, enabling him to pen his most famous work, *Messiah*. He repeated his quick recovery from his second stroke to continue his work.

Perhaps it was Handel's own struggles that contributed to him being a compassionate and generous man. He designated the proceeds from *Messiah*'s first performance to three charities—Mercer's Hospital, the Infirmary, and the prisoners of the Marshalseas'. The tradition of supporting charities with *Messiah* proceeds continues today.

Handel's generosity continued even at his death, dividing his assets among his servants and various charities, as well as leaving money to pay for his own funeral so that the burden would not fall on his loved ones.

Handel died, at age 74, in his rented house in London, April 14, 1759, the day after the 17th anniversary of *Messiah*'s first performance. He is buried in London's Westminster Abbey, in Poet's Corner.

Messiah

at Williamsburg United Methodist Church

1999 - 2024

In 1998, Carol Hunter was appointed Director of Music Ministries at Williamsburg United Methodist Church. In 1999, she organized a chorus of 124, including members of WUMC and many other regional churches, accompanied by a professional 18-piece orchestra and four soloists, to present the first *Messiah* concert on December 1, 1999. The chorus continued to grow through the years and by 2008, had grown to include 173 members, accompanied by a 20-piece orchestra.

In 2009, Richard Sowers was named Director of Music Ministries. In 2011, the orchestra became known as the Handel Chamber Orchestra, and the *Messiah* Manager position was added. Concert attendance continued to grow resulting in the 2013 decision to reduce the size of the chorus and present two concerts, enabling all guests to sit in the Sanctuary.

In 2014, Lou-Anne Smith was appointed Director of Music Ministries, and will conduct the 77-voice chorus, 22-piece Handel Chamber Orchestra and four soloists in observance of the 25th Anniversary of *Messiah* at Williamsburg United Church, on December 6 and 7, 2024, 282 years after *Messiah*'s first performance in Dublin, Ireland.

Messiah

A Sacred Oratorio

George Frideric Handel

Invocation	Pastor
Overture	Handel Chamber Orchestra
Recitative: <i>"Comfort Ye"</i>	Ian Lane, tenor
Air: <i>"Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted"</i>	Ian Lane, tenor
Chorus: <i>"And The Glory Of The Lord"</i>	
Recitative: <i>"Thus Saith The Lord"</i>	Branch Fields, bass
Recitative: <i>"But Who Shall Abide The Day Of His Coming"</i>	Branch Fields, bass
Chorus: <i>"And He Shall Purify"</i>	
Recitative: <i>"Behold, A Virgin Shall Conceive"</i>	Cecelia McKinley, mezzo-soprano
Air & Chorus: <i>"O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings To Zion"</i>	Cecelia McKinley, mezzo-soprano
Recitative: <i>"For, Behold, Darkness Shall Cover The Earth"</i>	Branch Fields, bass
Air: <i>"The People That Walked In Darkness"</i>	Branch Fields, bass
Chorus: <i>"For Unto Us A Child Is Born"</i>	
Pifa	Pastoral Symphony
Recitative: <i>"There Were Shepherds Abiding In The Field"</i>	Michelle Trovato, soprano
Recitative: <i>"And, Lo, The Angel Of The Lord Came Upon Them"</i>	Michelle Trovato, soprano
Recitative: <i>"And The Angel Said Unto Them"</i>	Michelle Trovato, soprano
Recitative: <i>"And Suddenly There Was With The Angel"</i>	Michelle Trovato, soprano

Chorus: *"Glory To God"*

Air: *"Rejoice Greatly, O Daughter Of Zion"*

Michelle Trovato, soprano

Recitative: *"Then Shall The Eyes Of The Blind"*

Cecelia McKinley, mezzo-soprano

Air: *"He Shall Feed His Flock Like A Shepherd"*

Cecelia McKinley, mezzo-soprano

Michelle Trovato, soprano

Chorus: *"His Yoke Is Easy"*

Offertory Prayer

Pastor

Offeratory Music: Royal Fireworks Music, Concerto Grosso No. 26

La paix

La Rejouissance

George F. Handel

At this time a free-will offering will be accepted.

Benediction

Pastor

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

And he shall reign for ever and ever.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Hallelujah!

Please join us for a candlelight reception in the Fellowship Hall.

CHORUS

We deeply appreciate and thank the Messiah Chorus members from 18 church choirs and 8 communities throughout the Hampton Roads Region, Elmhurst, IL, Fayetteville, NC, and Springfield, VA, who generously volunteered their time and beautiful voices to sing the message of Handel's beloved oratorio in honor of the 25th Anniversary of Messiah at WUMC. We honor them for their many years of participation (noted in parenthesis) and commitment and especially pay tribute to those charter members who sang during the first concert on December 1, 1999.

SOPRANO

Georgiana S. Avioli (13)
 Nathalie Bacskay (2)
 Linda Baker (13)
 🎵 Ginger Barr (17)
 Libby Daniel (5)
 Susan Daniel (5)
 Mary Dunnigan (2)
 Arleen Faustina (3)
 Janet Firestone (3)
 Wendy Geiger (11)
 Betsy Harrison (5)
 Susan Jones (1)
 Catrin Morgan (8)
 Dr. Pam Pare (17)
 Pat Ricciarelli (6)
 Lucia Villa Sebastian (5)
 Mary Self (13)
 Lynda Sharrett (20)
 Hanna Shinn-Anderson (2)
 Jennifer Staggs (9)
 Sue Steberl (19)
 🎵 Rita Welty (25)
 Lori Wisniewski (4)
 Carol Woody (9)
 Betsy Ziskind (21)

ALTO

Joyce Alewynse (18)
 Judy Alexander (15)
 Aysa Barginere (1)
 🎵 Kathryn Blue (15)
 Gitta Brewster (1)
 Meghan Roth-Clayton (3)
 Emily Hayden (2)
 Elizabeth Hiestand (18)
 Leana Long (3)
 Sarah Luke (2)
 Kristin McAlister (2)
 Myfanwy Morgan (15)
 Terri Morgan (22)
 Susan Noran (2)
 Susan Novak (10)
 Laurel Palmer (5)
 Debbie Rathke (6)
 Kay Shipp (2)
 Wendy Waldeck (12)
 JoAnn Youhas (3)

TENOR

Dr. Dave Amaker (12)
 Barbara Blanton (6)
 🎵 Eric Dawnkaski (24)
 Harry Doyle (16)
 Jim Drummond (14)
 Bill Forrest (6)
 Brad Kiehner (6)
 Ryan LaRock (1)
 Sandy Marcuson (14)
 Barbara Miller (23)
 Eric Palmer (6)
 Alex Schwartz (6)
 Clyde Self (13)
 Dennis Wargo (1)
 Steve Washburn (2)

BASS

Drew Alexander (7)
 Christopher Becke (11)
 Ethan Buck (2)
 Gerald Bullock (16)
 Brad Crawford (3)
 Bruce Firestone (3)
 🎵 Dave Jarman (7)
 Bob Lane (18)
 Alan Melton (3)
 Keith Morrow (22)
 John Noran (3)
 John Novack (10)
 Chris Ridley (15)
 Paul Robbins (2)
 Robert Trower (1)
 Jim Waldeck (14)
 Robert Weathers (12)



🎵 Charter Chorus Members

Charter Members who performed in the first Messiah Concert
 December, 1, 1999

HANDEL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Lou-Anne Smith, conductor

We thank the Handel Chamber Orchestra members for their performances and pay tribute to those orchestra members who performed during Messiah's first concert on December 1, 1999.

VIOLIN I

🎵 Susan Via,
concertmaster
 Simon Lapointe
 Susannah Livingston

VIOLA

Jena Chenkin
 Brian Evans

VIOLIN II

Susan Bedell
 Alyssa Evans
 Karen Stowe

CELLO

Sarah Glosson
 Dionne Smith

BASS

Ayca Kartari

OBOE

Victoria Hamrick
 Amy Cassiere

BASSOON

Ivy Haga

TRUMPET

Mark Nixon
 Ryan Staggs

ORGAN AND HARPSICHORD

🎵 Thomas Marshall

TIMPANI

🎵 Dan Knipple

REHEARSAL PIANIST

Sarah Bland

🎵 Charter Orchestra Members



Michelle Trovato, *Soprano*

Michelle Trovato, soprano, is delighted to return to sing *Messiah* with Williamsburg United Methodist Church. Other 2024 highlights include Violetta in *La Traviata*, Clint Borzoni's new opera *La Callas*, and as soprano soloist in Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and Mozart's *Coronation Mass*. She also appeared with the New York Philharmonic Chorus for the opera *Émigré* (recently broadcast on PBS) and Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*; and Connecticut Choral Society's Monteverdi's *Vespers*.

Other credits include: Seattle Opera, Opera Colorado, Utah Festival Opera, the Caramoor Festival, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Philharmonic of Southern New Jersey, Jackson Symphony, Spokane Symphony, Stamford Symphony, Symphonic Orchestra of Tirana (Albania), the Crimea Philharmonic Orchestra (Ukraine), Opera Les Azuriales (France), and the Kennedy Center.

Locally, Michelle has appeared with Opera in Williamsburg for their productions of *Così fan Tutte*, *La Cenerentola*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *L'elisir d'amore*, and *The Magic Flute*, with the Williamsburg Symphony in the World Premiere of Sophia Serghi's *Full Moon Haiku*; in recital with the Williamsburg Music Club and at the College of William & Mary; and as soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Lynchburg Choral Union.



Cecelia McKinley, *Mezzo-Soprano*

Noted for her "plush, glowing tones, and lyrical poise", this season contralto Cecelia McKinley embarks on her first season following her time as a Cafritz Young Artist with the Washington National Opera (Arts and Culture Texas). Her 2024-2025 season includes a debut with INSeries Opera in their season opener, Blitzstein's *Cradle Will Rock* as Mrs. Mister and Ella, as well as an exciting return to her home company as a soloist for WNO's "Gods & Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner" concert.

During her tenure as a Cafritz Artist, Cecelia made her Kennedy Center debut as Zweite Magde in Strauss' *Elektra*. Her time as a young artist with the company also included performances of Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette*, Arsace in *Partenope*, Mastrilla in *Songbird (La Perichole)*. A lover of new music and of collaboration with living composers, through WNO's American Opera Initiative Cecelia sang in three workshops and world premiers of critically-acclaimed new works: *Bubbie and the Demon* (2023), *What the Spirits Show* (2023), and *FOREVER* (2024)—for which she was hailed for her "scene-stealing tardigrade" (Twin Cities Arts Reader).

Cecelia has also been engaged by Ars Lyrica Houston as Fileno in Handel's comic cantata, *Clori, Tirsi, e Fileno*. the Roanoke Symphony as a soloist in both Handel's *Messiah* and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9.*, the Great Falls Philharmonic as the soloist in Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, and the University of Lynchburg as a recitalist and masterclass technician. Perfectly at home in concert repertoire, Cecelia has also performed as the alto soloist in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*.



Ian Lane, *Tenor*

Upon graduation from Virginia Tech, Ian Lane, tenor, was accepted into The United States Army Chorus, the vocal counterpart to The United States Army Band, "Pershing's Own." As a member of the world's most prestigious all male ensemble, he was a featured soloist across the nation, performing for audiences ranging from intimate gatherings of U.S. and foreign dignitaries to venues with audiences in the thousands. Since leaving the Army Chorus, Mr. Lane has become a frequently featured actor at The Riverside Center for the Performing Arts in Fredericksburg. Some of his favorite roles and shows include Dave, *The Full Monty* (featuring Sally Struthers); Sir Bedevere, *Monty Python's SPAMALOT*; Joey, *Sister Act*; Big Bopper, *Buddy – The Buddy Holly Story*; Santa, *A Christmas Story*; Samuel, *Pirates of Penzance*; Abner Dillon, *42nd Street* (featuring Broadway's original Annie, Andrea McArdle); and Gyp DeCarlo, *Jersey Boys*. A versatile performer, Mr. Lane is frequently featured as a guest soloist with area orchestras, choral societies, and churches. He resides in Fredericksburg with his wife, Liz and sons, AlanMichael and Brody. This performance is dedicated to victims of senseless violence around the world. May there one day be peace on earth.



Branch Fields, *Bass*

Branch Fields, described by Opera America as “a bass of resonant richness,” is a versatile performer engaged throughout North America and beyond in opera, musical theater, and concert. He has sung with Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Edmonton Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Utah Opera, Opera San Jose, and many other regional companies throughout the U.S. and Canada. In concert, Mr. Fields has performed with the Munich Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Santa Fe Symphony, MDR Leipzig, and the American Symphony Orchestra. His versatility as a singing actor led to his Broadway debut in *South Pacific*, understudying the role of Emile de Becque in the 2008 Lincoln Center Theater production, which won seven Tony Awards. He has been Emile in 7 productions of *South Pacific* throughout the U.S. and Canada, nominated for “Best Actor in a Musical” by theater critic circles in Boston, Massachusetts, and Richmond, Virginia.

Recent performances include Sir Lancelot for Intermountain Opera Bozeman, Robert in *Bridges of Madison County* for The Ghostlight Theater in Michigan, Leporello in *Don Giovanni* for Indianapolis Opera and Greensboro Opera, and the Commendatore for Opera in Williamsburg’s *Don Giovanni*. He was Capt. Von Trapp for Charlottesville Opera, Montana TheaterWorks, and The Southwest Michigan Symphony. In 2023, Mr. Fields was a guest artist in the Lackey Clinic fundraising gala, “A Night of Broadway Music” at the Ferguson Center for the Performing Arts. He played Frank in Opera in Williamsburg’s *Die Fledermaus*, and Balthazar in Greensboro Opera’s *Amahl & the Night Visitors*. This past spring, he joined David Grandis and the William and Mary Symphony and Choir as soloist for the Fauré *Requiem* and Beethoven *Ninth Symphony*. Mr. Fields is singing with the Virginia Chorale this season, and is a frequent soloist for Colonial Williamsburg events. He will perform Christmas songs for the Grand Illumination at the Capital in Colonial Williamsburg on Dec. 14th and 21st. Stream or download Mr. Fields’s album “Be Thou My Vision” on iTunes, Spotify, YouTube, and others.



Past Soloists

SOPRANO

Kathleen Bell ‘14
 Lisa Edwards-Burrs ‘09
 Rachel Holland ‘05
 Karen Hollifield-Gonzales ‘08
 Gretchen DeGraff Newman ‘02
 Gina Nice ‘00
 Georgeann Paddock ‘99, ‘01, ‘03, ‘04, ‘06, ‘07
 Laura Strickling ‘10, ‘11, ‘12
 Michele Trovato ‘16, ‘17, ‘18, ‘19, ‘20, ‘21, ‘22, ‘23
 Sarah Kate Walston ‘13, ‘15

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Lisa Relaford Coston ‘06, ‘09
 Kathleen Franz ‘05
 Lynn Kotrady ‘99, ‘00, ‘01, ‘02, ‘03, ‘04, ‘07
 Phaedra McNorton ‘10, ‘11, ‘15, ‘16, ‘17, ‘18, ‘19, ‘20, ‘21

ALTO

Merri Hanson King ‘08

CONTRALTO

Bekah Hughes Davis ‘12, ‘13, ‘14
 Cecelia McKinley ‘22
 Dr. Kelly J. Montgomery ‘23

TENOR

Daren Basnight ‘00
 Robert Crutchfield ‘99, ‘01
 Kerry Jennings ‘08
 Ian Lane ‘14, ‘15, ‘16, ‘17, ‘18, ‘19, ‘20, ‘21, ‘22, ‘23
 Douglas Lynch ‘02, ‘03, ‘04, ‘05, ‘06, ‘07
 Garry Sloan ‘11, ‘13
 James Taylor ‘09
 Kenneth Wood ‘10, ‘12

BASS

Branch Fields ‘14, ‘15, ‘16, ‘17, ‘18, ‘19, ‘20, ‘21, ‘23
 Christopher Goodbeer ‘99, ‘00
 Christopher Mooney ‘04, ‘05, ‘06, ‘08, ‘09, ‘10, ‘11, ‘12, ‘13, ‘23
 James Shaffran ‘01



Lou-Anne Smith, *Conductor 2014 - Present*

Lou-Anne Smith received her Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Baylor University in 1991 and thus began a music career that has spanned over thirty years. After graduation, Mrs. Smith moved to Philadelphia, PA and sang in composer book productions and taught voice in Drexel Hill, PA. In 1994 she moved to her hometown of Virginia Beach and began singing with the Virginia Opera Company as a Young Artist. She then sang small roles and sang with the chorus. She also worked as the pianist and music director for Zion Grace United Methodist Church in Norfolk, VA. This was the beginning of her larger career as a church musician. She has also served as Director of Music Ministries at Great Bridge UMC in Chesapeake, VA; Trinity UMC in Poquoson, VA; and now has served at Williamsburg for nearly 12 years. This is her tenth Messiah at Williamsburg.

She is the mother of two sons, Hunter, an Army musician (French Horn) serving the 82 Airborne at Ft. Liberty with his wife Analise, an elementary school music teacher; and Hamilton, an Aerospace Engineer who lives in New York City and works for Wingbrace out of Boston. Hamilton is engaged to Imane, a special education teacher, and they plan to be married in 2025. Lou-Anne married Mark Smith in 2006 and they recently celebrated their 18th anniversary, for which they are grateful after Mark's cancer scare in 2020.

Lou-Anne dedicates these performances to all those who suffer injustice around the world. May we be the light of Christ to all people.



Past Conductors



Richard Sowers, *Conductor 2009 - 2013*

In addition to conducting the annual Messiah concerts during his tenure, Mr. Sowers conducted various chorus and orchestra concerts, including the Duruflé *Requiem*, Vivaldi *Gloria* and Schubert's *Mass in G major*.

Prior to his appointment as Director of Music Ministries at Williamsburg UMC in August of 2009, Mr. Sowers served churches in Kentucky and Philadelphia where he was conductor and music director of the Abington Symphony Orchestra. A former Dean of the Lexington (KY) American Guild of Organists, Mr. Sowers was Director of Choral Activities and Assistant Professor of Voice at Lindsey Wilson College in south central Kentucky.

Former music director and conductor of The Louisville Chorus, Mr. Sowers was founder, music director and conductor of the Columbia Choral Society and the Lexington Bach Choir (now the Kentucky Bach Choir) and Baroque Consort. He holds Bachelor and Master degrees in applied voice from the University of Louisville School of Music, and is a graduate of the Education for Ministry program through the Sewanee School of Theology at the University of the South. Mr. Sowers lives in Kentucky and has two sons, Will and Andres.



Carol Hunter, *Conductor 1999 - 2008*

Carol Hunter has been living in her hometown of Elizabethtown, PA, since her retirement from full-time music ministry in 2009. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from Westminster Choir College (voice) and a Master's Degree from The University of Maryland, College Park (conducting). She also has a Certificate in Voice from the Geneva Music Conservatory and studied voice with Marianna Busching while living in the D.C. area.

Mrs. Hunter served four churches over 26 years, in Geneva, Switzerland; Reston, VA; and then Messiah UMC in Springfield, VA and Williamsburg UMC in Williamsburg, VA. In Reston she took over the annual concert of G. F. Handel's *Messiah* at the United Christian Parish, and later took the tradition with her to both Springfield and Williamsburg. These last two churches are celebrating their 35th and 25th anniversary concerts this year, respectively.

In addition to her church work Mrs. Hunter founded the Northern Virginia-based choral ensemble VOCE in 1991 and conducted them for nine years. They are celebrating their 35th Anniversary this season. With them she commissioned Dan Gawthrop to compose "Sing Me to Heaven." In 1996 she was honored to be one of three conductors to lead the Annual Kennedy Center Christmas *Messiah* Sing-in.

Mrs. Hunter lived overseas for almost 12 years, including Germany (Stuttgart and Bremen), Tel Aviv, Israel and Geneva, Switzerland. Her son Matthew and family live in Ashland, OR. She is active in several civic organizations and is on the board of Gretna Music, a professional presenting organization that has a summer concert series at Mt. Gretna, the Pennsylvania Chautauqua. Mrs. Hunter returns to guest conduct the *Messiah* "Hallelujah Chorus" in observance and honor of the 25th Anniversary of *Messiah* at Williamsburg United Methodist Church.



In Loving Memory

In Memoriam



The flowers on the table in front of the piano are in loving memory of *Messiah* Chorus members who left us much too soon. Dearly loved for their marvelous musical abilities and commitment to faithfully singing in *Messiah* throughout the years, memories of them will forever remain in the hearts of the Williamsburg United Methodist Church *Messiah* Chorus and Handel

Chorus

Burt Lightner, Bass

Vincent J. Byrne Sr., Bass

Ron Strong, Bass

Vladimir "Lad" Culkowski, Tenor

Carol B. Marsh, Alto

Wilbur Dean Larkin, Tenor

Susan Bookless, Soprano

Ann Storey, Soprano

Marshal Atkins, Bass

Maureen Coulter, Soprano

Carol Payne Brinkley, Soprano

William Harris, Bass

Dr. John C. Marsh, Bass

Barbara Hamson, Alto

April 25, 1973—June 8, 2015

April 1, 1935—October 18, 2016

August 11, 1955—April 2, 2016

September 21, 1941—August 18, 2017

October 31, 1932—May 19, 2018

November 30, 1933—October 16, 2018

April 6, 1932—November 5, 1918

June 24, 1932—July 4, 2019

December 8, 1933—August 11, 2019

January 2, 1940—August 13, 2019

November 8, 1953—February 4, 2021

January 1, 1935—March 6, 2021

September 17, 1933—July 14, 2021

1933—January 1, 2022

Chorus continued

Sharon Sams, Alto

June 5, 1943—May 8, 2023

Al Bills, Bass

April 21, 1930—September 13, 2023

Dr. Vincent Sutlive, Bass

October 29, 1932—October 4, 2023

Gil Monell, Bass

August 10, 1939—March 9, 2024

Handel Chamber Orchestra

Ulysses Kirksey, Cello

August 13, 2021

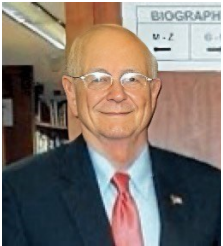
Volunteers

Valerie Hillyer, Volunteer

1947—April 10, 2020

Rhoda-Jo Stress, Volunteer

October 5, 2022



Warren Miller Bell

June 16, 1936—September 17, 2024

A native of EL Dorado, AR, Warren received his BS and MS in Civil Engineering from the University of Arkansas and an MBA from George Washington University. His distinguished 29 year naval career culminated in Warren's service as Commanding Officer of Navy Public Works Center in Guam. Rising to the rank of Captain, he served as a Seabee Operations Officer for Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 40 during the Vietnam War, earning the Bronze Star Medal with Combat V Device and other citations for his exemplary service. Upon retirement, Warren and Annette settled in Alexandria, VA where he worked as the city engineer.

Warren's passion for storytelling flourished and he delighted in creating tales for his children and grandchildren while crafting imaginative bedtime stories to invent memorable characters tailored to their interests. A voracious reader, Warren's strong interest in naval history led to the writing and publishing of four critically acclaimed novels about the World War II years. An accomplished woodworker, he built exquisite furniture including a cradle used by all his grandchildren.

Music held a special place in his heart! Warren's rich baritone voice graced church and community choirs, often as a soloist in performances of Handel's Messiah. The Bells created a musical environment for their children, always encouraging them to study music and participate in school bands. After moving to Williamsburg in 2006, he and Annette soon joined the choir and Messiah chorus and faithfully sang until retiring in 2019. Warren served on numerous WUMC boards and served as Facility Manager for his Ford's Colony neighborhood. He enjoyed vegetable gardening and volunteering as a Boy Scout troop leader.

He led a remarkably creative life dedicated to his family, church, music, and service to his country. Farewell to an 'officer and a gentleman', fondly remembered by the Messiah Chorus family and friends!



Phyllis Lee

August 24, 1942—February 4, 2024

Born and raised in Richmond, VA, Phyllis received her BA in Elementary Education with a minor in Library College in 1964. A lifelong educator, she taught in VA, CA, NY and MA where she completed her MS degree in Moderate Special Education which she taught at the middle and high school levels. During her Peabody school system years, she reorganized her neighborhood's elementary school and helped transition the city's junior high school to a middle school. Upon retiring to Williamsburg, Phyllis and husband Dave enjoyed traveling and volunteering throughout the area, as a York County election official in addition to serving on many committees for WUMC and Windsor Meade. A beloved member of the Sanctuary Choir, Phyllis was a Messiah Chorus member from 2005 until her retirement in 2022 and will be well remembered for her gracious manner and kindness to all.

Messiah Reflections

I have a friend whom I see only once each year, but I depend upon that reacquaintanceship all year long.

I speak of course of *The Messiah*. It's a reframing of the Christmas Story like no other, really, considering the fact that it depicts only the Annunciation of Jesus' birth to shepherds. In fact, that resounding proclamation is the sole New Testament scene explicitly depicted in *all* *The Messiah*. (Is that how you would write it?)

No, *The Messiah* is a profound exploration of the promises of the *Old Testament*, made by God to the Hebrew people. There is no drama as such – no impersonation of biblical characters, no soliloquies. Instead, the text by Charles Jennens combines with the soaring score of George Frideric Handel to convey a deep sense of longing, cosmic mystery, surprise and exultant joy. The hearer is dared to face to a greater realization, a reckless trust, and to ask “could he *really* be the One for whom we've all waited?”

I am convinced Handel wanted it that way. A man who delighted in giving away his wealth, he attended each year a benefit concert for his favorite charity, London's Foundling Hospital for abandoned and orphaned children. In 1759, there was Handel in the audience – stooped, halt, and unable to see the performance or the faces of those enraptured with its transcendent beauty, for he was now old and blind. Yet *Messiah* had lost none of its strange, otherworldly power to move people to action, giving urgency and life to the ancient hope of Scripture. A week later, Handel died peacefully at home, still hearing the orchestral strains that “unto us a child is born; unto us, a Son is given” - the living Hope of humankind in the flesh, awake and alive. And calling for a response.

Rev. Dave Rochford, WUMC Senior Pastor

I have always been enchanted by the richness of Handel's baroque music, but *Messiah*, somewhat musically understated and written to be performed in church, remains my personal favorite. It is nothing short of a blessing to be a part of recounting the Christmas story via Handel's beautiful oratorio. For more than a dozen years, I have experienced the joy of singing *Messiah* as a start to the Christmas season. Though singing this work has been a constant, the actual telling of the story is nuanced from year to year. Directors—Carol Hunter, Richard Sowers, and Lou-Anne Smith-- have brought their varied interpretations to the work. So have the rest of us: Singers, musicians, as well as the audience itself bring to this special form of worship our own individual joys and challenges as we hear the Living Word. Thus, the reverberating story is heard anew from year to year and from person to person. And that is the way it should be. Hallelujah!

Joyce Alewynse, Chorus Member; Donor

It has been a privilege to have sung in two performances of the Christmas portion of the Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*, for more than 20 years before large and appreciative audiences. Over this period the music has been taught and led by three excellent directors, Carol Hunter, Richard Sowers and Lou-Anne Smith. It has been rewarding to sing with a chorus composed of people from a variety of churches and backgrounds who not only have good voices but who find *Messiah* significant. It has been a joy to have heard outstanding soloists; and to have an orchestra plus Tom Marshall at the organ and harpsichord. I have appreciated not only the spirit and dedication of those who perform, but of all those volunteers, coordinated in recent years by Donna Herman, who graciously help with all the tasks necessary for the performances, from setting up chairs in the sanctuary to helping the men in the chorus with their bow ties. But best of all *Messiah* has over the years provided me, and I hope all who perform and hear it, with a vivid and dramatic reminder, that one has come to comfort his people, that “his yoke is easy and his burden is light.” Hallelujah!

Robert Casey, Charter Chorus Member; Donor

The annual WUMC performance of Handel's "*Messiah*" is for me the beginning of the holidays in the true spirit of the Christmas season. I love Handel's settings of the scriptures related to the coming of Jesus; getting caught up in the excitement and anticipation of Ev'ry Valley and Thou That Tellest Good Tidings, as well as soaking in the peaceful contemplation of the Pastoral Symphony and He Shall Feed His Flock. It's been my privilege to have performed nearly all of the 25 years that WUMC has presented this concert, I'm deeply grateful to Carol for starting the tradition, and to all who have followed her for keeping it. It's just not Christmas without the "*Messiah*" - Hallelujah!

Vicky Hamrick, Handel Chamber Orchestra

Without words, great music lifts the spirit into a transcendent realm, far beyond the transient and mundane. Like the winged guardians of Isaiah's vision, one can only say, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” But Handel's *Messiah* carries thoughts to ride on the phrasing of the song. Together they convey the longing of the heart for some ultimate hallelujah. Handel creates that, but then God created Handel. We are deeply indebted to Tom Marshall, Lou Ann Smith, choir and orchestra for bringing this gift to life.

Richard and Peggy Soulen, Donors

I have been singing with the *Messiah* chorus for all of our 25 years, albeit two of them were virtual. It has been wonderful to see how our chorus and orchestra have grown, and our number of attendees has grown, moving us to two concerts instead of just one. Having sung it for so many years, I have it all memorized, which allows me to fully appreciate the words, the music, and the hope it imparts. I can feel all the voices surround me like a warm blanket of love and joy. The best part of singing with these great musicians, is getting to see people you may only see once a year and catching up on news and making new friends. What has been really exciting for me is meeting up with past William and Mary choir members after having lost touch for so many years, only to find them singing in this chorus! I have reunited with four different W&M choir members over the years. The Christmas portion of *Messiah* brings me hope, joy, and the beginning of a glorious Advent season. I wouldn't trade this experience for anything. **Rita Welty, Chorus Charter**

Peace On Earth.

Goodwill Towards Men

We thank the following donors for their generous support.

All donations received after November 17th will be acknowledged in the WUMC Sunday bulletins and monthly newsletters.

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	Messiah Friend Society: \$50-\$74 Anonymous	Cary Street Society: \$10-\$24 Anonymous Marian Currier

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We pay tribute to the following members and friends of our church who enthusiastically and graciously assisted with the many tasks for Messiah 2024. Their service spirit has shown and continues to shine brightly while working together to offer the gifts and joy of the Messiah's 25th Anniversary concerts to our church and the community.

Messiah Manager:

Donna Herman

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Judy Alexander
Doug Arbuckle
Jeremy Boudreaux
Gerald Bullock
Jake Foley
Bill Herman
Greg Johnson
Kim Johnson
Randy Casey-Rutland
Jennifer Staggs
Ryan Staggs

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Charlotte Calli
Marcella LeGrand
Natalie Shuford

Child Care Hostess:

Marilyn Casey
Wesley Students

Flowers:

Donna Herman
Elgin Morris,
Williamsburg Floral

Handel's Helpers:

Chris Burge
Bill Herman
Amelia Jensen
Wesley Students

Programs:

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Michelle Roy
Lou-Anne Smith

**Program Proofers
and Stuffers:**

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Kelli Mansel-Arbuckle
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Cassie Maye
Charlotte McCarter
Maynard Randolph
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Barbara Stahl
Donna Ward

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Bill Herman
Gwen Hinton
Amadea Mitchell
Linda Upshaw

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Jim McCarter

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Tom Justice
Gail Justice
Barbara Neary

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Glory to God in the Highest!



Messiah Memories



Celebrating 25 years!



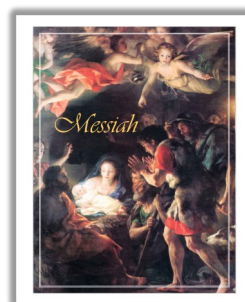
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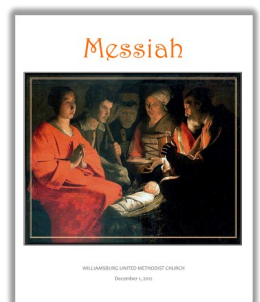
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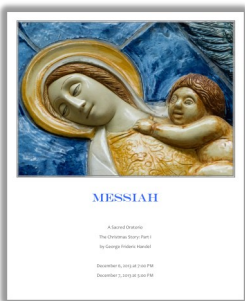
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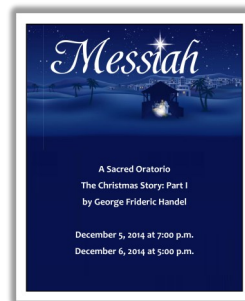
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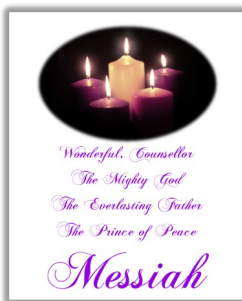
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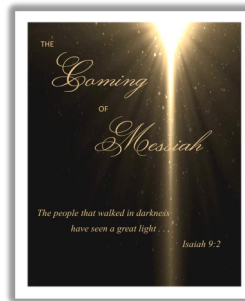
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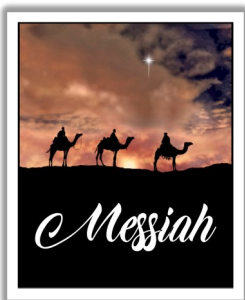
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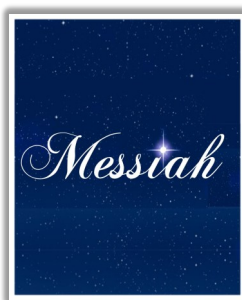
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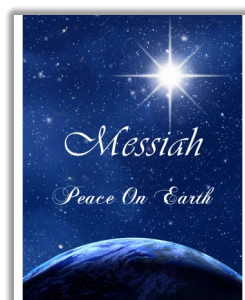
2018



2019



2022



2023



2024



