

The Vine

I am the vine; you are the branches...John 15:5

A publication of Valley Falls Christian Church

December 2020

The famous poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was no stranger to suffering. One of his daughters had died in infancy.

Then in the summer of 1861, his wife Fanny's dress caught fire. In order to protect the children, she ran into Wadsworth's study where he was napping. He awakened and tried to extinguish the fire with a rug and then with his own body.

Fanny died the next day from the extensive burns, and Wadsworth was burned badly enough about the face and hands that he was unable to attend her funeral.

This all occurred while the Civil War was tearing a nation apart, sometimes even pitting brother against brother. The first Christmas after his wife's death Longfellow wrote in his journal: "How inexpressibly sad are all holidays."

As the war raged on, his Christmas day entry in 1862 stated: "A merry Christmas' say the children, but that is no more for me."

In March of 1863, his oldest son, Charles, enlisted as a Union soldier to fight on behalf of Abraham Lincoln's northern army.

On December 1, 1863, Longfellow received a telegram informing him that his son was seriously injured four days earlier. A bullet had entered Charles' left shoulder, barely grazed his spine and exited through the back of his right shoulder.

Longfellow learned the injury was very serious and if his son survived, recovery could take up to six months. He penned no entry in his journal that Christmas, but he did write a poem called 'Christmas Bells,' which became the Christmas carol 'I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.'

The carol is in our hymnal, or one can easily find the lyrics on the internet. He begins with the lament that people were merry Christmas-ing and bells were ringing during the season even though the nation was torn apart by war and his own life was marred by tragedy. How could there be peace on earth and good will at such a time?

The following stanza seems out of place for a hymn celebrating the Christmas season:

*And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,*

*And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

The nation was torn by war as his own spirit was torn by grief. The relentless violence and hatred certainly seemed to mock the Christmas message of peace and hope. Two stanzas from his poem that were omitted from the carol make his despair clear:

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

Yet, Longfellow was able to receive the message of Advent that is stronger than the strongest hate and drowns out the deepest despair.

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."*

Our world is full of despair right now. Fear and uncertainty reign. The division in our nation is deep. The answer is the same as it was in 1863. It is the same as it was over 2000 years ago.

The Son of God was born to a virgin. Emmanuel, God with us. His perfect life, death and resurrection would right the wrongs of our sin. He truly is the Prince of Peace. We echo, along with the angels who visited shepherds in the fields the night Jesus was born: **Luke 2:14 (ESV)** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Merry Christmas! May you have peace and hope through your faith in Jesus Christ.

Mike



CHRISTMAS FAMILY ADOPTION: The church is adopting four children this Christmas. Instructions and sign up are in the foyer. Gifts are due by noon, Tuesday, December 15th.



CHRISTMAS FOOD BOXES: We will fill the food boxes after church on Dec. 13th. We need wrapped shoe boxes, and food items to put in them. Suggested items: fruit, homebaked goodies, individually wrapped, pudding, jello, teas, crackers, applesauce, cocoa etc. See Deb Gerstner for details.



Christmas Eve Service
Thursday, Dec 24th @ 7
Everyone Welcome

Men's Breakfast: The men's breakfast will be Saturday, December 12th at 8:00 AM. Stan Farr is cooking.

Pocket Change for Progress: Please continue saving your pocket change for VFCC youth programs and School Supply Project. There is a bucket for your change anytime, not just the third Sunday.

Past sermons are available online at www.valleyfallsc.org. If you cannot access them this way, you may ask Pastor Mike for a cd copy.

On line sermon opportunity: For those sheltering at home, church service will be available to live stream on YouTube (and Facebook). Also available on YouTube, previous services. Don't forget to subscribe to Valley Falls Christian Church YouTube channel

Scriptures:

- Dec 6 God...I'm Lonely
2 Tim 4:9-17
- Dec 13 Wayne Flack preaches.
Psalms 40:1-4
- Dec 20 **Christmas Sunday**
Peace in the midst of Chaos
Luke 2:8-20
- Dec 27 Home is where your heart is.
John 14:1-6

Come let us
Adore
Him



Dec	Greeters	Scripture reader	Communion Devotion
6	Mitchell	Mitchell	Stan Farr
13	Farr	Farr	Stan Farr
20	Flack	Flack	Stan Farr
27	Gatzemeyer	Gatzemeyer	Stan Farr

December communion devotion and prayer: Stan Farr

Prayer Requests: Emma Dockweiler, Becky Arnold, Clay Biester, Kevin Gatzemeyer, Rachel Arnold Detring's Family has Covid, they have two little girls.

OUR SOLDIERS: Curtis Mitchell, Aaron Cook, Jacob Mitchell, Matthew Branam, Noe Garza, Gary Flack, Dayton Flack

Church Offerings:

- Oct 18 - \$ 818
- Oct 25 - \$ 642
- Nov 01 - \$ 1421
- Nov 08 - \$ 1092
- Nov 15 - \$ 814

Gyve totals not included in totals.

Give to VFCC online through our partnership with Gyve at: <https://gyve.io/give/valleyfallscc>

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 3 Matthew Boyce
 - 4 Allison Thomas
 - 13 Misty Eaton
 - 15 Mike & Gina Kirby (1984)
 - 18 Ray & Rhonda Mitchell (1982)
 - 20 Charlie & Clare Brown (1970)
 - 21 Dan & Janet Strang
 - 23 Judy Flack
 - 26 CHARLES WATKINS
Chad Spencer
 - 28 Alucard Heinen
 - 30 Jacob & Kari Mitchell (2005)
 - 31 Jarret & Aisha Mitchell (2014)
- (Names in CAPS in Mission Field)



Mike will be out of the office from Dec 7th-13th.

No Youth Group Sunday, Dec 13th.



Sunflower Crafters,

Thank you so much for your generous gift to Birthright. The blankets and hats you donated were super cute. Know that our moms will be so grateful, especially now as the weather gets cooler. Without generous donations like yours, Birthright could not do the work it does here in Topeka.

Thank You!

God Bless,

Mary Margaret Sperry,
Birthright Volunteer

Valley Falls Christian Church

511 Oak Street
Valley Falls, KS 66088

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

Phone: 785-945-6757
Email: office@valleyfallsc.org
On the web: www.valleyfallsc.org
Find us on Facebook!

Mike Kirby, Pastor

You are welcome to join us!

Sunday Service times: Bible Study (all ages) – 9:00 AM

Youth Group (grades 6-12) – 5:00

Sunday	Monday	Wednesday	Thursday	Saturday
		2	3	5
		6:15 PM – Worship prac 7:00 Bible Study		
6	7	9	10	12
5 PM – Youth Group	6 PM – Sunflower Crafters	No Worship prac No Bible Study		8 AM Men’s Breakfast
13	14	16	17	19
NO Youth Group	6 PM – Sunflower Crafters	6:15 PM – Worship prac 7:00 PM Bible Study		
20	21	23	24	26
5 PM Youth Group	6 PM – Sunflower Crafters	No Worship prac No Bible Study	7 PM Christmas Eve Service	
27	28	30	31	
5 PM Youth Group	6 PM – Sunflower Crafters	6:15 PM – Worship prac 7:00 PM Bible Study		