



*“There is something about life that is best described
with the word gift.”*

by Pastor Bruce Benson, host

You will notice in another letter arriving shortly that you are encouraged to give a gift to *Sing For Joy* this season, and I will gladly encourage the same thing here. But should I be calling it a contribution instead of a gift? Or perhaps a donation? If we at *Sing For Joy* are actively requesting it, can it still be called a gift? The answer isn't necessarily negative, I know. Think about all those Christmas lists that kids and parents have compiled over the years. “What I want for Christmas.” Or “What I want for my birthday.” Even when parents wrap up something on the list and put it under the tree for a child, everyone involved still calls it a gift, and thank-yous are exchanged all around. (Similarly, we will sincerely thank you for any gift to *Sing For Joy*.)

The term “gift” is a fascinating one, especially for Christians, Jews and other religious people. We always wonder about the nature of life and love: is it right to call it all a gift, or is that just putting a pious Pollyanna spin on a dog-eat-dog existence? That is, should we regard life and the unfolding of creation as a sacred gift, or is there some payment obligation built into existence? Work as payment perhaps? Or ethical and moral living as the cost of a good life? Is the God of the Bible a giving God, a gift-giver or a bargain maker? Or maybe worse, a briber?

In this Advent and Christmas season I think we can rather quickly set aside any notions of God as briber. That idea doesn't ring true to either the biblical message or ordinary human experience. Dealing with the idea of God as bargainer, however, takes a bit more time and care because clearly the biblical message suggests that the creator of life has built some patterns or arrangements into existence that seem very

much like marketplace exchanges rather than sheer gifts. “You reap what you sow,” is one way of stating the matter. Establishing a connection between commandments and covenants is another. Even the Beatitudes — “Blessed are those who ...” — suggests a kind of two-way transaction between our living and God's blessing. But when we have taken seriously the rather undeniable reality that there are consequences for our behavior — individual, national and international behavior — there seems still to be an aspect of life that is not quite covered by that analysis. There is still something about life that is best described with the word “gift.”

Regardless of how hard one works at being good, no matter how deserving one strives to be, the experience of being loved is the experience of receiving a gift. There just is something about love — many would say the same about birth, beauty, music, even good food — that makes the word “gift” feel like the right word. It is honesty, not wishful thinking, that calls the holy birth in Bethlehem a gift. Receive it with joy and gratitude. Merry Christmas!

Peace be with you,



DECEMBER 7, 2014

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR B)

- (1R) Isaiah 40:1–11
(PS) Psalm 85:1–2, 8–13
(2R) 2 Peter 3:8–15a
(G) Mark 1:1–8

Savior of the Nations Come & Prepare the Royal Highway (Hymns in Alternation)

(NUN KOMM DER HEIDEN HEILAND & BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN) – Johann Walter / Swedish Folk Tune / Saint Ambrose, lyricist / Martin Luther, lyricist / Frans Mikael Franzén, lyricist / John Ferguson, arranger (2R, G)
St. Olaf Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts Mixed Choir: Northfield, MN / John Ferguson, organ
(CD) 2008 *St. Olaf Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts: Opening Hymn Festival* / ST. OLAF COLLEGE
© 2008 St. Olaf College stolaf.edu

Messiah: Comfort Ye, Comfort Ye My People –

George Frideric Handel (1R)
The Boston Baroque Orchestra / Bruce Fowler, tenor / Martin Pearlman
(CD) *Messiah* / TELARC / 2CD-80322
© 1992 Telarc, Concord Music Group telarc.com

Messiah: Every Valley Shall Be Exalted –

George Frideric Handel (1R)
The Boston Baroque Orchestra / Bruce Fowler, tenor / Martin Pearlman
(CD) *Messiah* / TELARC / 2CD-80322
© 1992 Telarc, Concord Music Group telarc.com

What is the Crying at Jordan? – Philip Moore /

Carol Christopher Drake, lyricist (G)
Cathedral Choir of the Cathedral of St. John: Albuquerque, NM / Eric Parker, tenor / Maxine Thévenot
(CD) *Mystic Meaning: Music for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany* / RAVEN / OAR-955
© 2013 Raven ravencd.com

Climb to the Top of the Highest Mountain –

Carolyn Jennings (1R)
The St. Olaf Choir: Northfield, MN / Nidaros Cathedral Jentekor: Trondheim, Norway / Anton Armstrong / Anita Brevik
(CD) *Christmas in Norway with the St. Olaf Choir* / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-3501
© 2013 St. Olaf Records stolafrecords.com

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry (WINCHESTER NEW) –

Musikalisches Handbuch, Hamburg / Charles Coffin, lyricist / Richard R. Webster, arranger (G)
Advent Press Choir / Richard R. Webster
(CD) *Fanfare! The Music of Richard Webster* / ADVENT PRESS / © 2000 Advent Press advent-press.com

DECEMBER 14, 2014

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR B)

- (1R) Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
(PS) Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b–55
(2R) 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
(G) John 1:6–8, 19–28

The Apostles: Prologue, Op. 49 – Edward Elgar (1R)

Massed Choirs of St. Olaf College: Northfield, MN / St. Olaf Orchestra / Christopher Aspaas
(CD) *Where Peace and Love and Hope Abide* / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-3008/09
© 2007 St. Olaf Records stolafrecords.com

Carols & Lullabies: Christmas in the Southwest: In Frozen

December – Catalonian Carol / Conrad Susa, arranger (1R)
VocalEssence Ensemble Singers: Minneapolis, MN / Philip Brunelle
(CD) *Welcome Christmas: Carols & Lullabies from Around the World* / CLARION / CLR908CD
© 2004 Clarion, Loft Recordings, LLC gothic-catalog.com

Psalm 126 – Abbie Betinis (PS)

Magnum Chorum: St. Paul, MN / David Dickau
(CD) *Home, Harvest, & Healing: A Sing For Joy Hymn Festival* / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-2648
© 2003 St. Olaf Records stolafrecords.com

This is the Record of John – Orlando Gibbons (G)

The Choir of King's College / The London Early Music Group: London, United Kingdom / Michael Chance, alto / Philip Ledger
(CD) *Orlando Gibbons: Tudor Church Music* / ASV / CD GAU 123
© 1990 ASV sanctuaryclassics.com

As the Dark Awaits the Dawn – Christopher Aspaas /

Susan Palo Cherwien, lyricist (G)
Massed Choirs of St. Olaf College: Northfield, MN / St. Olaf Orchestra / Christopher Aspaas
(CD) *Rejoice, Give Thanks, and Sing* / ST. OLAF RECORDS / E-3404/05
© 2011 St. Olaf Records stolafrecords.com

The Kingdom of Love – David Ashley White /

Carl Daw, lyricist (G)
The Choir of Palmer Memorial Church: Houston, TX / Brady Knapp
(CD) *Praise the Spirit: Music of David Ashley White* / GOTHIC / G-49254
© 2007 Gothic, Gothic Records, Inc. gothicrecords.com

Carols are for singing along. Hymns are for singing along. That is the way Christmas (and the Christian life) are meant to be also.

–Pastor Bruce Benson

DECEMBER 21, 2014

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR B)

- (1R) 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16
(PS) Luke 1:46b–55 or Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26
(2R) Romans 16:25–27
(G) Luke 1:26–38

Nowell! Nowell! This is the Salutation – 15th Century /

Gary Ruschman, arranger (G)
Cantus: Minneapolis, MN

(CD) *Christmas With Cantus* / CANTUS RECORDINGS / CTS-1211

© 2011 Cantus Recordings cantussings.org

Gabriel's Message – Basque Carol / Alexander Craig, arranger / Sabine Baring-Gould, translator (G)

New York Polyphony: New York, NY
(CD) *Sing Thee Nowell* / BIS / BIS-2099

© 2014 BIS bis.se

A Maiden Most Gentle (LOURDES HYMN) – French Traditional / Andrew Carter, lyricist / Andrew Carter, arranger (G)

Quire of London / Andrew Carter

(CD) *Andrew Carter's Christmas Carols* / YORK AMBISONIC / YORK CD 169

© 2002 York Ambisonic

Quatre Motets sur des Thèmes Gregoriens: Tota pulchra es – Maurice Duruflé (G)

Voices of Ascension: New York, NY / Dennis Keene

(CD) *Ave Maria* / DELOS / DE 3138

© 1993 Delos, Delos Productions, Inc. delosmusic.com

A Virgin Most Pure; A Virgin Unspotted – Carols Old and New; Wyeth's Repository of Music (G)

Boston Camerata: Boston, MA / Joel Cohen

(CD) *An American Christmas* / ERATO / 4509-92874-2

© 1993 Erato

Ave Maria – Franz Biebl (G)

Dale Warland Singers: Minneapolis, MN / Dale Warland

(CD) *Lux Aurumque* / GOTHIC / G-4952

© 2007 Gothic, Gothic Records, Inc. gothicrecords.com

DECEMBER 28, 2014

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS (YEAR B)

(1R) Isaiah 61:10–62:3

(PS) Psalm 148

(2R) Galatians 4:4–7

(G) Luke 2:22–40

(C) Christmas Season

I Will Greatly Rejoice – Knut Nystedt (1R)

The St. Olaf Cantorei: Northfield, MN / John Ferguson

(CD) *The St. Olaf Christmas Festival Radio Program 1996* /

WCAL / WCAL C-1996

© 1996 WCAL wcal.org

Thanksgiving Anthem: "O Praise the Lord of Heaven" – William Billings (PS)

Bella Voce: Chicago, IL / Paul Hillier

(CD) *Home to Thanksgiving* / HARMONIA MUNDI /

HMX 2907264

© 1999 Harmonia Mundi harmoniamundi.com

O Praise the Lord of Heaven – John Rutter (PS)

The Cambridge Singers / The City of London Sinfonia /

John Rutter

(CD) *O Praise the Lord of Heaven* / COLLEGIUM RECORDS /

CSCD 522

© 2013 Collegium Records, Naxos of America, Inc.

collegium.co.uk

Mitt hjerte alltid vanker (My Heart Will Always Wander) – Norwegian Carol (C)

Oda Carlsen: Oslo, Norway, soprano

(CD) *Sing For Joy Archives* / ST. OLAF COLLEGE /

Not For Resale

© St. Olaf College stolaf.edu

Let All Together Praise Our God (LOBT GOTT, IHR CHRISTEN, ALLZUGLEICH) – Nicolaus Herman / Nicolaus Herman, lyricist / Johann Sebastian Bach, arranger (2R)

The Cathedral Singers: Chicago, IL / Richard Proulx

(CD) *In Sweet Rejoicing: Ars Antiqua Choralis Volume III* / GIA PUBLICATIONS / GIA CD-323

© 1994 GIA Publications giamusic.com

Nunc Dimittis – Robert Scholz (G)

Massed Choirs of St. Olaf College: Northfield, MN /

St. Olaf Orchestra / Sigrid Johnson

(CD) *The Wondrous Gift is Given* / ST. OLAF RECORDS /

E-3465/6

© 2012 St. Olaf Records stolafrecords.com

LISTENERS' CORNER

Thanks to our generous listeners who fuel us with gifts and praise. Your contributions and kind words are a blessing.

"I love [listening to] your program on the internet!"
- Bismarck, Missouri

"I listen to Sing For Joy every Sunday. I'm unable to get to a church anymore as I'm living in an assisted living facility after surviving a stroke. Your program is my weekly church service. I love it!"
- La Porte, Indiana

"Having had a mother who was an organist and choir director, [Sing For Joy] brings back wonderful childhood memories."
- via Facebook

"I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoy hearing Sing For Joy on KORN radio, Mitchell, SD every Sunday morning. It is a terrific way to prepare myself for worship at my own church, First Lutheran, an hour later. I love all the selections you choose which relate to the readings of the day. Thanks so much for a great program."
- Mitchell, South Dakota

Join in the *Sing For Joy* conversation on Facebook and Twitter (@SingForJoyRadio) and stream the show online at singforjoy.org



Sing For Joy[®]

singforjoy.org

Sing For Joy[®]
is sponsored by:



Sukup Manufacturing Co.
sukup.com



stolaf.edu



acda.org

*and faithful listeners
like you.*

Thank you for your gifts!

In Honor Of:

Miss Margaret Mills, Rachel Anne Mills & Ryker

In Memory Of:

Melvin Abel, husband

James & David Balke, brothers

Neal Canon

Jonathan S. Coltvet

Rev. Jeff Laeger-Hagemeister

my father, Donald Hoger

Dr. Terrance Olsen

Darryl Patten

*The Reverend Doctor Alvin Charles Rueter, founder of
Sing For Joy, on the 93rd anniversary of his birth*

DECEMBER 2014 / YEAR B



Sing For Joy staff:
W. Bruce Benson
Host
John Ferguson
Music Adviser
Jeffrey O'Donnell
Producer and Music Director
Joshua Wyatt
Associate Producer
Carolyn Pierson
Communications Coordinator

Website: singforjoy.org
Email: singforjoy@stolaf.edu
Phone: 507-786-8596



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Olaf College