

Choral music for the holiday  
season!

# Out of Darkness



Presented twice

Saturday, December 13, 2025, 3pm

Trinity Lutheran Church, 15 Randolph Ave.

— and —

Sunday, December 14, 2025, 4pm

Impact Ministries, 19763 Longmeadow Rd.

Funded in part by:



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**Alto**

Deb Danner  
Margaret McKee  
Jennifer Wedde  
Marcia Goodrich  
Shannon Lang  
Caroline Lewis  
Margaret McKee  
Gerrie Mangum  
Marty Massey  
Cathy Moats  
Elizabeth Phillipson  
Brenda Plummer  
Therese Ramey  
Amelia Reazin  
Daria Riegler  
Rebecca Stan  
Sue Thomas  
Allison Todd

**Baritone**

Tim Doyle  
Mark Holmes  
Brian McClinton

Buddy Mentzer  
Daniel Ritchey  
Terry Tierney

**Bass**

Torben Aarsand  
Matthew Hinz  
Dennis Holovach

**Tenor**

Nickolas Cummings  
Dennis Galvan  
Jed Hall  
Gerry McCarney  
Rich Owens

**Soprano**

Zoey Breakall  
Brittney Arbogast  
Linda Barnhart  
Candice Craig  
Esme Diez  
Beverly Kotchenreuther  
Mary Licht  
Kimberly McMurtrie  
Carolyn Mentzer  
Marianne Mooney  
Kathy Robinson  
Alexandra Slick  
Sallie Sterling  
Robin Merchant  
Spickler  
Kimberley Stockslager  
Connie Stottlemeyer

# GRACE

*Notes*

**Director—Janet Palmer**

**Alto**—Caroline Lewis, Gerrie Mangum, Marty Massey, Susan Kleit, Margaret McKee, Brenda Plummer

**Soprano**—Elaine Snyder, Marianne Mooney, Linda Barnhart, Kathy Robinson, Beverly Kotchenreuther

**Soprano 2**—Robin Merchant Spickler, Carolyn Mentzer

**Grace Notes**—Founded as an extension of HCA in February, 2025 by Janet Palmer, Grace Notes is a treble ensemble dedicated to bringing choral music to area populations who otherwise may not have access to choral music.

## **Out of Darkness**

### **Hagerstown Choral Arts**

Glow.....Eric Whitacre

Winter Lullaby (Little Dear-my-Soul).....Music by Luke Flynn,  
Text by Eugene Field

Candlelight Carol.....John Rutter

Before the Marvel of this Night.....Carl Schalk

Judah's Land.....Appalachian Carol,  
Arranged by David N. Johnson

Silent Night.....Arranged by Dan Forrest

**\*\*\**Intermission*\*\*\***

### **Grace Notes – a treble group of Hagerstown Choral Arts**

He Is Born.....Donna Gartman Schultz

Little Drummer Boy..... Arranged by Jay Althouse

Dona Nobis (Grant Us Peace).....Mary Lynn Lightfoot

### **Hagerstown Choral Arts**

What Sweeter Music .....John Rutter

Midnight Clear.....Philip Kern

Three Winter Carols.....Music by Dale Wood,  
Text by Charlotte Lee

Gaudete.....Traditional Carol Arranged by Philip Lawson

The Work of Christmas.....Dan Forrest

Please no flash photography or recording of any kind.

## PROGRAM NOTES

**Glow** - Simple and welcoming, Glow was premiered in 2013 by the World of Color Honor Choir, a virtual choir made up of over 700 singers from across America. Written by Eric Whitacre, one of today's most prolific choral composers, it was later selected to be part of the night-time spectacular Winter Dreams show at California's Disneyland. Inspired by a poem by Edward Esch, it is known for its simple elegance, with harmonies that shimmer and create a sense of reverence for beauty of freshly fallen snow.

**Winter Lullaby (little Dear-my-Soul)** - Film and television composer Luke Flynn sets Eugene Field's warm, feel-good poetry to a lyrical and timeless melody that captures a feeling of nostalgia and the magic of winter. Field's poetry shares the tender story of a mother telling her child of the coming winter and the beauties that it brings.

**Candlelight Carol** - Internationally acclaimed choral composer John Rutter's Candlelight Carol was commissioned in 1984 by the Church of the Assumption in Pittsburgh, PA, and was inspired by the painting "Nativity At Night" by Geertgen tot Sint Jans. The carol focuses on the love of a mother that first night in the stable. With musical phrases shaped to mimic the rise and fall of flickering candlelight, one can almost hear Mary singing a lullaby to the infant King.

**Before The Marvel Of This Night** - Published as a new hymn in 1982, Carl Schalk wrote this piece at the request of long-time collaborator and poet Jaroslav Vajda, as an interpretation of how the angel choirs might have presented their response in front of an audience of a few shepherds in the fields. Its unusual meter sparks the imagination, and the poetry paints a vivid picture of the celestial scene.

**Judah's Land** - is an Appalachian carol, often titled "Gentle Stranger," known for its traditional, folk-style arrangement of the Nativity story. It has been arranged for various choral settings, featuring a rangy melody and traditional harmonies. The arranger of this version, David N. Johnson, was an American organist and composer whose other works include hymns such as "The Lone, Wild Bird" and "Earth And All Stars".

**Silent Night** - A gentle piano introduction sets the stage for Dan Forrest's stunning new take on this timeless carol. From a quiet and simple beginning of the beloved text, the piece builds to an overwhelming and powerful declaration of Christ's birth, before returning to a peaceful conclusion.

**The Little Drummer Boy/Peace On Earth** - The Little Drummer Boy (originally known as Carol of the Drum) is a popular Christmas song written by the American classical music composer and teacher Katherine Kennicott Davis in 1941, and has been recorded by many artists throughout the years. In 1977, Bing Crosby was recording his final Christmas special, which included David Bowie (can you think of a more diverse combination?). The song selected for them to sing was The Little Drummer Boy, which Bowie expressed his displeasure over, stating that it didn't show his voice off very well, and he honestly just didn't like it. This inspired the music supervisors of the special to write a new tune for Bowie to perform along with Crosby's rendition of Drummer Boy. The performance was recorded two hours after the new music was created.

**He Is Born** - A bright and happy version of a well-known French carol, this arrangement, by Donna Gartman Schultz, uses meter changes and a verse that features the alto section to create an interesting new take on a traditional carol from over 150 years ago.

**Dona Nobis Pacem (Grant Us Peace)** - This piece by Mary Lynn Lightfoot uses just three Latin words, Dona Nobis Pacem, which means "Grant Us Peace" to paint a beautiful and lyrical portrait of the universal and ongoing wish for peace on earth.

**What Sweeter Music** - John Rutter chose this text, by 17th-century poet Robert Herrick, because "it perfectly encapsulates the spirit of carol singing, and of Christmas itself". Written in 1987 for the Festival of Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge, What Sweeter Music remains one of Rutter's most popular and enduring compositions.

**Midnight Clear** - A new melodic setting of the familiar Christmas carol by Edmund Sears, this selection dances through the story of the first Christmas, ending with a joyous chorus of Hallelujahs! Phillip Kern's unusual take on the usual text captures the essence of the holiday season.

**Gaudete** - Appearing in the Pies Cantiones collection of carols, published in 1582, this versatile celebration of the birth of Christ has been performed by numerous different groups. This arrangement, by the former King's Singer Philip Lawson, honors the original piece while bringing it into the 21st century.

Gaudete! Christus est natus Rejoice! Christ is born  
Ex Maria vergine, gaudete! Of the Virgin Mary. Rejoice!  
Tempus adest gratiae A time of grace is here,  
Hoc quod optabamus, For which we had hoped.  
Carmina laetitiae Songs of joy  
Devote reddamus. We devotedly return.

Deus homo factus est God is made man;  
Natura mirante, Nature marvels.  
Mundus renovatus est The world is renewed  
A Christo regnante. By Christ's reign.

Exechielis porta Ezekiel's gate  
Clausa pertransitur, Was closed, but could be passed through  
Unde lux est orta Thus, the light shone  
Sauls invenitur And found salvation.

Ergo nostra contio Therefore our assembly  
Psallat iam in lustro Sings now in brightness.  
Benedicat Domino: We bless the Lord;  
Salus Regi nostro. Greetings to our King.

**The Work Of Christmas** - From the composer, Dan Forrest: "I first encountered this Howard Thurman text in January 2014. Its beautiful lines call us not to merely take in the sights and sounds of the celebration, but to respond by doing our part in working toward the "peace on earth" that we so often sing about. For me, some texts are best left alone as poetry, others "sing to me" but only after the song is coaxed out of them. Once in a while, though, a text seems to sing right off the page, and this poem did just that."

**Three Winter Carols** - This piece focuses on the universal themes of kindness, peace and love, that are often associated with the winter season. With lyrics by Charlotte Lee, composer Dale Wood gives us a secular choral suite filled with lush contemporary harmonies and a feeling of warmth and care.

## **Our leaders and accompanist**

**Janet Palmer, Artistic Director** After graduating from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois, with a degree in Choral Music Education, Janet taught K-12 choir and vocal and general music in public schools in Illinois, Wyoming, and Wisconsin for 38 years, retiring in 2019. While in Wyoming, she was named Teacher of the Year in Big Horn County School District 1, and co-founded the Big Horn County Elementary Music Festival. Janet worked for nearly 40 years as a choir director and church musician in multiple denominations, and as director, music director, accompanist, choreographer, or costumer in well over 100 school and community theatre productions. Janet sings Soprano II or whatever part is needed. She is also involved with Potomac Playmakers and Authentic Community Theatre in Hagerstown. Janet and her husband, Larry, relocated to Maryland in April of 2023, and are enjoying getting to know and become involved in the area and spending more time with granddaughter Coraline.

**Caleb Wescott, Associate Director**, a native of Boonsboro, Maryland, currently teaches music in Washington County Public Schools. Graduating with his master's degree in 2025 and bachelor's degree in 2022, he studied music education and classical saxophone at the University of Tennessee with a focus on instrumental music. Caleb directs his musical passions toward voice, singing with various ensembles and performing as a church musician. Caleb sings Tenor as a member of HCA. Self-taught, he plays the piano by ear and enjoys performing periodically for smaller venues. In his free time, Caleb enjoys working outdoors and tinkering with automobiles.

**Mary Remsburg, Accompanist and Rehearsal Assistant**, was raised in the small town of Franklin, West Virginia, and graduated from Shepherd University in 2016 with a Music Education degree.

As a child, she was part of the Shenandoah Valley Children's Choir for nine years, which gave her the opportunity to be selected to perform at numerous venues, including Carnegie Hall and The White House.

While at Shepherd University, Mary played in the Jazz Combo and Jazz Ensemble, earning the honor of performing with award winning composer Maria Schneider. Mary also performed at several Honors Recitals at the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, as a classical soloist and in the Jazz Combo. She accompanied for Women's Camerata, performance forums and senior recitals.

Currently, Mary teaches private studio lessons at Shepherd University, teaches at Saint James School, and is the accompanist and rehearsal assistant for Hagerstown Choral Arts. Mary also frequently plays for musical productions, recitals, recordings, private events, and concerts.

Mary released a folk album *Sounds Like Home*, under the stage name Mister Mae, and her music has been featured on multiple radio programs both in the United States and the United Kingdom. She is married to Chase Remsburg, a fellow graduate of Shepherd University.

#### **Hagerstown Choral Arts Board of Directors**

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## **Consider Sponsoring Hagerstown Choral Arts Inc.**

We are a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Your support enables us to bring the joy of choral singing to area singers and provide free performances to our community. All donations are tax deductible.

Visit the Sponsor HCA tab on our website to donate online

[www.hca-md.org](http://www.hca-md.org)

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### Special thanks to

- Pastor Les MacIntosh and Impact Ministries for providing us a home where we rehearse, meet and perform.
- Washington County Gaming Commission for their grant to purchase an electronic piano system.
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- Trinity Lutheran Church the use of their beautiful space for our concert.
- The many singers, their families, other volunteers, and audience members who have been a part of Hagerstown Choral Arts over the years.
- Meg Ritchey for expert editing.

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**Hagerstown Choral Arts, Inc.**

[www.hca-md.org](http://www.hca-md.org)

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Bringing the best choral music to Hagerstown and the tri-state area through volunteer, auditioned community membership. We provide a welcoming and musically satisfying experience for local singers.



Join us for our upcoming events

**Friday, Dec. 26, 2025 @ 4 pm**

HCA sings carols during the Hagerstown  
Historic Houses of Worship Tour

Trinity Lutheran Church 15 Randolph Ave.

**Saturday May 2, 2026 @ 3 pm**

**“Into Light”**

St. John’s Episcopal Church  
101 S. Prospect St.

**Monday, May 25, 2026 @ 11 am**

**“Memorial Day Commemoration”**

Antietam National Cemetery Sharpsburg, MD

**Sunday, July 5, 2026 @ 7pm**

HCA joins the Hagerstown Municipal Band to  
celebrate America’s 250th birthday!

Location: TBD

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**HCA WILL  
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NEW MEMBERS**

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**2026 AT 7PM**

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