

Westover Reflections – June 2025

“Hear me as I pray, O Lord. Be merciful and answer me! Do not turn your back on me. O God of my salvation.

-Psalm 27: 7, 9

Good day, Saints,

One thing that I believe: People of every culture know what it means to be human. The people of ancient Israel, who were not as sophisticated as some of the surrounding peoples, nevertheless hit upon a wonderfully insightful and beautifully simple truth: **being human means “having ears”** (the capacity, if you will, to listen, hear, internalize, reflect, and respond).

Deuteronomy 6:4 is God’s urgent reminder to the people then and now: **“Listen, Israel!”**

Of course, we know that the people of Israel were willfully deaf at times, though the words of **Deuteronomy** was often on their lips. Reading the Gospel, we see that Jesus berated the selective deafness of the people when He said, **“They have ears but do not listen.”** Time after time, Jesus challenged the people to **act like responsible human beings**.

The words from the Psalmist are a prayer that God will listen to us. But Jesus reminds us that we, too, must listen, and that we must listen in a particular way. For example, in **Matthew, chapter five**, Jesus says, **“You have heard...but I say to you: love your enemies.”**

Jesus was saying that we must listen for, **and to**, God’s voice. We have ears, but like many of the people in Jesus’ day we fail to hear and fear to respond.

Look! Every society teaches its people how to think, and more than a few folks think the way they think is the best or only way. Jesus asks us to listen and listen again, and not simply to continue to think in the same old ways, but to rethink some cherished and biased ways. The words from the Gospel are a case in point that some messages are difficult to receive; for it is easy to love our neighbors. **But love our enemies?** Now, that is a word that more often than not goes in one ear and out the other, which is unworthy of us as human beings.

We come on these Sunday mornings, expecting God to hear our prayers. But let’s remember that we, too, are being called to listen, listen to the Holy. To be sure, no small and simple task! But our responsibility all the same.

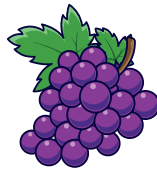
Stay faithful; stay encouraged.

Still in His Peace,
Pastor William



First Fruits of Worship!

by Bruce Smith
Director of Music Ministries



Hymns & Spiritual Songs: A Comparison

“speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and Spiritual songs. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...”
Ephesians 5:19, 20

Every church has a language of worship. For some it is the beautiful melodies of historic hymns and the poetic language of ancient liturgy, while for others it is the expressive, emotional language of modern, contemporary songs and choruses. And for still others, there is the hybrid of bringing together the best of both of these forms of musical expression. In truth there is great beauty and meaning behind both the form and substance of the hymns of the church and the contemporary worship song. As a church that embraces both, it is meaningful to explore both of these forms of worship music so we can embrace both as worthy expressions of our love for the Lord each Sunday.

Let’s begin with the structure and form of both of these style of worship music. The hymn and contemporary worship song have very similar framework. Though many hymns have only verses, in many cases both are comprised of verses and refrains (or choruses) with the most memorable portion of the song or hymn being in the refrain. Look at the way a hymn like “Trust and Obey” is put together. The verse contains the depth of why we should trust the Lord:

*“When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way.
When we do His good will,
He abides with us still, and with all we will trust and obey”.*

The concluding refrain, though lacking complexity, draws us to the most significant expression **“Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”** The structure is similar in contemporary worship songs like “Here I Am To Worship”. The verse contains the depth:

*“Light of the world, You stepped out into darkness, opened my eyes let me see
beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You”.*

The memorable chorus brings home the theme of the song

*“Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that You’re my God.
You’re altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me”.*

In structure, hymns and contemporary worship songs are very similar and they also share common language. Though they are often written about very different themes, they both use expressive and beautiful imagery as well as down to earth language to allow us to express our love for God. Some of the most beautiful language can be found in hymns like “It Is Well With My Soul” using analogies as “peace like a river”, and “sorrows like sea billows roll”. But contemporary worship songs also contain beautiful lyrics as in “How Great Is Our God”: “The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty. He wraps Himself in light, and darkness tries to hide and trembles at his voice”. While this expressive imagery is meaningful to us, we also need down to earth language to resonate in our hearts as we sing hymns like “I Need Thee Every Hour:”

*“I need Thee, O I need Thee. Every hour I need Thee.
O bless me now my Savior I come to Thee.”*

As well as more straight forward contemporary songs like “There Is None Like You”:

*“There is none like You. No one else can touch my heart like You do
I could search for all eternity long and find there is none like You.”*

First Fruits of Worship (continued)

But hymns and contemporary worship songs have many distinctive differences. The most prominent difference is their focus and themes. Hymns tend to be written to describe church doctrine and reinforce faith through story telling and descriptive narratives about what God has done. In hymns like “The Church’s One Foundation”, the focus is on the tenants of our faith and the church universal and how Christ died to give birth to this great community of faith. In “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” Martin Luther uses descriptive language to embolden us to faith in our powerful and strong warrior God. Hymns tend to be about things and describes tenants of our faith.

Contrasting that now with contemporary worship songs, which are more experiential in nature. The writers of contemporary song seek to explore our immediate relationship with Christ. They are not songs about, but songs “towards”. It is easy to discard contemporary worship songs as being repetitive and without as much depth as hymns, but in reality, these songs are about the depth of our feelings for Jesus. How many of us when we sit down with our spouse or children use flowery, descriptive language to tell them how much we love them. We say it over and over again – “I love you”. That’s a powerful expression when it is used in the first person – which is the context of most contemporary songs. Songs like “I Love You, Lord” are filled with basic expressions to God:

*“I love you Lord, and I lift my voice to worship You, Oh my soul rejoice!
Take joy my King in what You hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear.”*

This is a love song to God from the heart of a man, woman or child who just wants to tell God how they feel about Him. Often, to connect more deeply with God, those words are repeated for emphasis and to draw faith, more passionately.

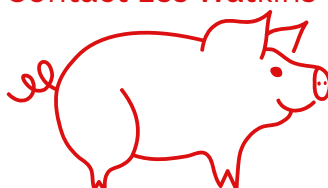
What can we see from the similarities and differences in hymns and spiritual songs? We can see and experience how meaningful they both are to our worship language. We need to have our faith increased in worship by retelling the stories of God’s faithfulness in “How Firm A Foundation”, and we need the simple expressions of need for Christ in the song “Breathe” – “And I, I’m desperate for You. And I, I’m lost without You”. We need them both to give Him the greatest praise for all He has done for us. So, as we live out our discipleship in worship here at Westover each week, let’s heed the challenge of the Apostle Paul, and “speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in Your heart to the Lord!”



BBQ - Friday, May 30

The UMM are hosting their annual BBQ on Friday, May 30 Lunch is served from 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM and dinner is 4:00 to 7:00 PM. Plates are \$12 each, and include pork bbq, slaw, potato salad, hushpuppies, dessert and drink. We can always use more desserts and volunteers on Friday.

Come for lunch or dinner and bring a friend!
Questions? Contact Les Watkins or Kent Gibson.



Dinner and Movie Night

Dinner and movie night is on Friday, June 13. We'll enjoy a pasta and salad dinner at 6:30 followed by the movie *War Room*, a really powerful and thought provoking Christian film.



Movie night is always a great time of fellowship, fun and food. Dinner and movie are free; donations are encouraged to offset the cost of dinner and to help stock our blessing box.

Children's Room "work in process"

The children's room (formerly "nursery") beside the office in the Education Building is currently in the process of being spruced up! More information coming soon!

Please be mindful that there may be supplies and "mess" that make this a less than desirable place for kiddos temporarily. And please, no storing items in the room.

We look forward to having a bright, fresh room for the littles!

VBS, coming soon!

Join us for a beachy Vacation Bible School! We'll be doing an abbreviated version of Cokesbury's "Waves of Wonder" on Friday evening July 18 and Saturday morning, July 19.



More details will follow soon, but please contact Sharron Gibson at 919-614-0467 or sharron.gibson9194@gmail.com if you would like to be a part of our fun adventure!



Mark your calendars:

May 30 - UMM BBQ 11:00 AM-2:00 PM and 4:00-7:00 PM

June 7 - Craft circle 10:00 AM (Wesley Hall)

June 7 - Lunch 12:00 PM (bring your own) (Wesley Hall)

June 7 - United Women of Faith 12:30 PM (Wesley Hall)

June 13 - Ladies Lunch 11:30 AM (Pam's Farmhouse Restaurant)

June 13 - Dinner and movie night 6:30 PM (Fellowship Hall)

July 18-19 - VBS



Craft Circle and UWF

Join us on Saturday, June 7 for craft circle, lunch and UWF book study. Can't make it to all three? No worries, we'd love to have you for any and all!

Craft circle will be making knotted blankets to be donated. This is an easy, fun craft for all skill levels. UWF will continue our book study of *The Most Misunderstood Women of the Bible*. This month we are reading and discussing Chapter 4 "Rahab."



Lucky Ladies Lunch

All ladies are invited to join us for a "lucky" ladies lunch on Friday, June 13. We'll meet for lunch at 11:30 AM and Pam's Farmhouse Restaurant. Please RSVP to the church office by June 6 if you plan to attend.



Happy Birthday

Happy June birthday to:

2 Ayanh Ksor

2 Allie McDonald

5 Lucas Ksor

5 Samuel Danskin

12 Lucy Walters

13 Briana Adebiyi

14 Danielle Poole Joyner

27 Richard Montes

29 Ron Hunter

29 Peggy Johnson



Info or feedback for newsletter? Contact Sharron Gibson at Sharron.Gibson9194@gmail.com