



MESSENGER

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF TITUSVILLE
206 S. HOPKINS AVE, TITUSVILLE, FL 32796
JANUARY 2024

The real story behind 'Good King Wenceslas'

By Heather Hahn

Dec. 15, 2023 | [UM News](#)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/the-real-story-behind-good-king-wenceslas>

Key Points:

- † The famed British carol about a generous king on a cold winter's night takes inspiration from a very real Christian martyr.
- † Václav the Good, whose name is Latinized as Wenceslas, is still regarded as an important figure in his Czech homeland — with a prominent statue and national holiday to his name.
- † Some United Methodists see lessons in his story for today.

Think of it as the English-speaking world's most popular day-after-Christmas carol.

Musical groups as diverse as the [Royal Philharmonic Orchestra](#), [Mannheim Steamroller](#), [the Beatles](#) and countless carolers in Victorian garb have all offered their own renditions of "Good King Wenceslas."

The carol about a generous ruler trudging out to help a poor man, "[when the snow lay round about, deep, and crisp, and even,](#)" takes place not on Dec. 25 but on the Feast of Stephen, Dec. 26.

The British carol first appeared [in a Victorian-era collection of children's stories](#), with the intent of encouraging Christian charity. But the inspiration for this fanciful tale was a very real Christian martyr who lived in the 10th century.

The historical Wenceslas wasn't English. He wasn't a king. In his Czech homeland, he wasn't even

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associated with Christmas.

However, he remains an important national figure in today's Czech Republic — where he is known to Czech speakers as Václav rather than Wenceslas, the Latinized version of his name.



The famed British carol “Good King Wenceslas” is inspired by a Christian martyr who remains an important figure in his Czech homeland. The real Wenceslas — known as Václav the Good — lived from about A.D. 907 to 929. For nearly 100 years, a large statue of him as an armed knight on horseback has stood proudly in Prague's Wenceslas Square. It was sculpted by Josef Václav Myslbek. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

The Catholic Church has named him the country's patron saint. He is meaningful to other Czechs as well, [including the country's United Methodists](#).

“Václav is a prominent figure from our past,” said the Rev. Jana Křížová, a United Methodist pastor in Prague. “He is a symbol of the Czech state.”

It also makes a certain poetic sense that a song about the Wenceslas of yore would be set on the feast day of [Stephen, the first Christian martyr named in the New Testament](#).

Saintly beginnings

The real Wenceslas — known as Václav the Good — lived from about A.D. 907 to 929, and the story of his brief 22 years on this earth featured more family treachery than a season of “Succession.”

His father, Vratislaus I, was the Duke of Bohemia and a Christian. His mother, Drahomíra, though baptized before the marriage, was aligned with Bohemia's pagans. As a child, Václav was raised largely by his Christian paternal grandmother, Ludmila — who was

later canonized as a saint in her own right.

When Václav was about 13, his father died in battle and Ludmila became regent. But the regency did not last long. His mother had Ludmila killed — resenting her mother-in-law's influence on the government and her soon-to-be duke son. Newly empowered, Drahomíra also sought to suppress Bohemia's Christians.

When Václav became Duke of Bohemia himself at age 18, he instead sought to spread Christianity. He commissioned the building of several churches including part of what is now St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. He also developed a reputation as a wise and compassionate ruler, known for his deeds of mercy.

Legend has it that he paid particular attention to caring for the poor, widows, orphans and even prisoners. He opposed the slave market and would buy slaves in order to set them free. He also is known for successfully negotiating peace with the Bavarians, who had been traditional enemies of Bohemians.



An engraving by Brothers Dalziel featured for the carol “Good King Wenceslas” in an 1879 hymn book by Henry Ramsden depicts the saint performing the charitable acts for which he became famous. The carol about a generous ruler trudging out to help a poor man takes place on the Feast of Stephen, Dec. 26. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Soon after his death, Václav's tomb at St. Vitus became a popular site for pilgrimage, and through many shifts in what powers ruled the region, he remained a hero to the Czech people. To this day, he is still a familiar sight to many Czechs.

For nearly 100 years, a large statue of him as an armed knight on horseback has stood proudly in Prague's

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2023 November Budget Summary

The Finance Committee appreciates your contributions and donations. With your support we will be able to continue sharing God's love with those around us.

<u>Income</u>	
Total Income:	\$52,567
<u>Expenses</u>	
Church Programs:	\$0
Finance:	\$0
Church Administration:	\$840
Facility Maintenance:	\$11,810
Personnel:	\$21,236
Payables:	\$1,307
Conference Apportionments:	\$0
<u>Total Expenses:</u>	<u>\$35,193</u>
Income Under Expenses:	\$17,374

The budget for 2023 is **\$489,821** which, divided evenly, makes each month's goal \$40,818 rather than being weighted differently throughout the year. Although we have begun trying to cut expenses where we reasonably can, we are still feeling the financial pinch. If you are able to still contribute during these lean times, please help us to maintain our regular operating costs as you find you are able. Only with the generosity of our congregation have we been able to weather the storms of the past and even the current storm we are in.

Thank you for your loving generosity in keeping this church operating!

January Anniversaries

19 Bill & Kathy Irelan 22 Tom & Lisa Mosier
20 Randy & Lynn Coleman

January Birthdays

1 Judy Titus 22 Bill Irelan
7 Wayne Cook 22 Diane Styles
9 Natalie Walls 23 Mike Mustard
16 Pat Morgan 28 Ruth Alman
16 Truman Scarborough 30 Jake Huether
20 Tom Mosier



(Continued from page 2)

Wenceslas Square. Václav's feast day of Sept. 28 is also a national holiday that celebrates Czech statehood.

Křížová, the United Methodist pastor, said most Czech people know few details of Václav's life and they enjoy Sept. 28 more as a day off than anything else.

Nevertheless, she said, whenever something significant happens in the life of the country, the Czech people crowd into Wenceslas Square.

On Oct. 28, 1918, the Czech people gathered in front of the statue to hear the Czechoslovak declaration of independence. The square also was the main site of [the Velvet Revolution](#), popular demonstrations in 1989 that nonviolently led to Czechoslovakia's transition from Communist rule to democracy. The dissident leader who became Czechoslovakia's first democratically elected president, Václav Havel, even shared the saint's name.

"The Wenceslas tradition matters," said Křížová, who like the saint has her own mission of mercy. She coordinates United Methodist refugee ministries, [working especially with Ukrainians displaced by war](#).

Becoming the good king

The transition of Václav, the saintly duke of Bohemia, to Wenceslas, the good king of Christmas carol fame, came about 900 years after his reign.

The song's fans can thank [John Mason Neale](#) — a 19th century Anglican priest, scholar and hymn writer — for this addition to the holiday season.

Neale had a passion for the medieval church, and he spent much of his ministry translating devotionals and poems from Latin and Greek to make them accessible to English-speaking worshippers. He also wrote some 60 hymns himself.

"Good King Wenceslas" was outside his norm in that he turned to a Bohemian legend for inspiration rather than the writing of medieval monks. The carol first appeared in Neale's "Deeds of Faith," a children's book from 1849, and again in his "Carols for Christmastide" from 1853. Neale set the words to the tune of "Tempus adest floridum," ("Spring has now unwrapped the flowers"), a 16th-century song for spring.

Neale contributed other beloved hymns to the Advent and Christmas seasons including his translations and settings for "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" and "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice."

But like Wenceslas himself, Neale's legacy can't be limited to Christmas tradition.

"Neale was concerned about resurrecting what he perceived to be the ancient glory of the church," said C. Michael Hawn, professor emeritus of church music at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

"Part of this was a revitalization of interest in the Christian year."

Other treasured hymns in the United Methodist Hymnal [that bear Neale's name](#) include "All Glory, Laud and Honor," "Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation" and "Of the Father's Love Begotten."

A good way to start the Christian year

The Rev. Andrew Bridgeman, a United Methodist pastor in the Mountain Sky Conference, shares Neale's love for the Christian liturgical year and has a special fondness for "Good King Wenceslas."

Bridgeman — no stranger to snow "deep and crisp and even" — makes a point at each church he serves of including the carol as part of worship on the first Sunday of Advent.

"I see it as a bridge between the end of the liturgical year and its beginning," said the pastor of Lewistown, Denton and Winifred United Methodist churches in Montana.

"It connects the Reign of Christ Sunday with the Advent of our hope as a concrete example of how we may let Christ's light shine. Wenceslas is both an example of the way things are and the way things can be."

Bridgeman first got to know the carol as a student at Spring Arbor University, a Free Methodist school in Spring Arbor, Michigan, where his dormitory each Christmas performed "Good King Wenceslas" with their own added verses. He said he saw young men — about the same age as Václav during his reign — start out shy and then begin to sing with gusto.

Bridgeman sees reason for United Methodists to be similarly enlivened by the story of Wenceslas.

"I find hope in the story of Wenceslas," the pastor said. "The song relates the incredible lengths that Wenceslas went to help his people."

In the carol, Wenceslas sees a poor man gathering winter fuel. Rather than ignoring the man and ignoring the need, Wenceslas goes bravely into the night through "rudewind's wild lament and the bitter weather." His page then follows in the good king's footsteps, just as Christians are called to follow the path set by Christ.

Wenceslas, Bridgeman added, also makes a good foil

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Patchwork Friends

Patchwork Friends is another group of United Methodist Women who meet on the first each month at 9:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Here we average of 100 quilts which are distributed to various members of our congregation who rehab, in the hospital, to families with a new baby or who have lost a loved one.



We also give quilts to our service men and women currently serving, to veterans, and to entering the service. Our red, white and blue quilts are used to decorate the sanctuary for Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Labor Day, and World Prayer Day.

You do not need to know how to sew to join us. We break down the process into many small jobs. If you can iron, use scissors, tie a knot, or match colors, we can use your help. This is a small group who would welcome new members. Each quilt we make is done so with loving hands and with healing prayers.

We meet on the 1st Wednesday of each month (November 7th) at 9:00 a.m. in Quilting Room.
For more information, contact Glenda Waring at GLW43@cfl.rr.com.



2024 Offering Envelopes

Available now at the back
of the sanctuary

If you are missing your box of offering envelopes,
please contact the church office.

(Continued from page 4)

for the other earthly king Christians hear about at Christmas time, [the villainous Herod](#). The Gospel of Matthew tells how Herod saw Jesus' birth as a threat and how his efforts to stop the coming Messiah led to the slaughtering of children.

“In Herod, I find a leader consumed with having, holding and maintaining power. Herod —whose faith is in himself, who would resort to violence, who knows no peace — is so often us,” Bridgeman said.

But in Wenceslas, Bridgeman sees someone whose mind, heart and arms were unreservedly open to his neighbors.

“Wenceslas is the saintly leader who reminds us that we belong wholly to God and one another,” the Montana pastor said. “He and his song remind us that we cannot remain comfortable by the fire when our neighbors are cold, hungry and in need. We must go out into the night, into the wintry winds, into the billowing snow for the sake of our neighbor.”

In his native land, Křížová said the saintly ruler's story continues to inspire.

“People still project their ideals onto the figure of Wenceslas,” she said.

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free Daily or Friday Digests](#).



Artist Chris Dunn imagines Wenceslas as a kindly bear king and his subjects as woodland animals in an illustration for the carol “Good King Wenceslas” in the children’s book “Time for Rhyme.” Image used with permission by the artist. To learn more about Dunn, visit www.chris-dunn.co.uk.

Community Breakfast Needs

Pancake Syrup

Frozen Grands Bisquits

Cooking Spray

Vegetable Oil

Peanut Butter

Jam/Jelly

Butter

Grits

Dawn Dish Soap

Coffee



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How long is the Christmas season?

Christmas is not just one day, but a season of thirteen days from sunset Christmas Eve (Dec. 24) through Epiphany (Jan. 6).

The thirteenth day of Christmas, Epiphany, an even more ancient Christian celebration than Christmas, originally focused on the nativity, God's incarnation (God made flesh) in the birth of Jesus Christ and Christ's baptism. Today, it commemorates the visiting of the Christ Child by the Magi (Wise Men) with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Gift giving in some cultures extends throughout the 13 days of Christmas; elsewhere, gift giving is limited to Christmas Eve or Christmas Day or Jan. 5 or 6.

See 12 creative, simple ideas to help celebrate the season.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.



Decorations for the Advent and Christmas seasons hang in Glendale United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tenn. Photo by Steven Kyle Adair, United Methodist Communications.

What is the purpose of the Season after Epiphany?

The purpose of the Season after Epiphany is to help the whole congregation get ready to accompany candidates preparing for baptism.

The first Sunday focuses on the Baptism of Christ and the last Sunday on the Transfiguration. These “bookend Sundays” frame the whole of Jesus’ journey in ministry. We start at the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry at his baptism and conclude with a glimpse of its fulfillment in the age to come in his Transfiguration. As it frames Jesus’ journey in ministry, so it also frames the journey of his disciples, then and now.

The scripture readings in the lectionary provide two distinct pathways of focus for this season.

One pathway, marked by the Old Testament and Gospel readings, follows Jesus in his earliest days with his

disciples, from their calling to beginning to learn what it means live in his way. These scriptures help the local church to focus *outward* on inviting others to join them, or “Come and see.” The hope is that some who respond to your congregation’s invitation may choose to “Come and stay” to prepare for baptism.

The other pathway, through Paul’s letters to the church in Corinth, helps focus the church *inward*. These readings help congregations work on internal issues in their church life so they can walk more effectively with those preparing for baptism when Lent begins.

By either pathway, the church is supported by the scriptures of this season for its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.

What is Ordinary Time?

The Christian year includes two central cycles focused on major events in the life of Christ: the Christmas cycle (Advent-Christmas-Epiphany) and Easter cycle (Lent-Easter-Pentecost).

Each of these seasons begins with a time of preparation and anticipation followed by a time of celebration. A season designated as Ordinary Time follows each cycle.

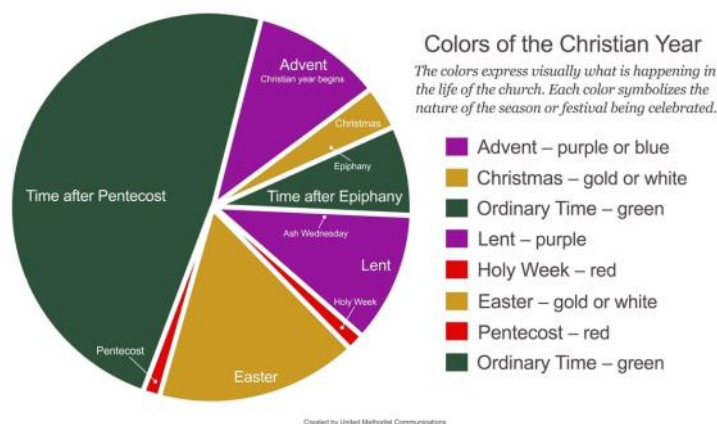
The word "ordinary" here does not mean “routine” or “not special.” Instead, it refers to the "ordinal numbers" (first, second, third, etc.) used to name and count the Sundays (such as the Third Sunday after Epiphany). This term comes from the Latin *ordinalis*, meaning "numbered" or "ordered," and *tempus ordinarium*, “measured time.”

The first period of Ordinary Time, called the Season after Epiphany, begins on Epiphany Day and ends on the day before Ash Wednesday (the beginning of Lent). The central theme of this season is the calling of disciples and the early ministry of Jesus.

For some congregations, this will mean a focus on evangelism, as found in the Old Testament and [Gospel](#) reading for each week. For others, the focus will be preparing to help others grow in their discipleship. The [Epistle](#) reading each week emphasizes this.

The second period of Ordinary Time, the Season after Pentecost, follows the Easter cycle. It begins the day after Pentecost and continues to Advent. The purpose of this season is to support new disciples and the whole congregation in living out the gifts and callings discerned during the Easter Season and commissioned

The Christian Year



The Christian year includes the central seasons of Christmas and Easter followed by Ordinary Time. The colors associated with the different seasons express visually what is happening in the life of the church. Each color symbolizes the nature of the festival being celebrated. Graphic by Laurens Glass, United Methodist Communications.

on the Day of Pentecost.

Every year, Christians experience the contrast between the central seasons of Christmas and Easter, where we see God in the events around the coming of Christ, and the in-between times, where we see, speak about and join God’s ongoing work in the world.

We thus experience two regular cycles of preparation, celebration and action in ministry each year, with the Ordinary Times as the primary periods of action.

This content was produced by Ask The UMC, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.

Keep doing the things you love.

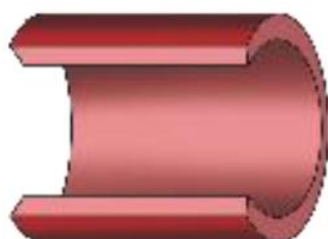
Catch health problems before they go too far.

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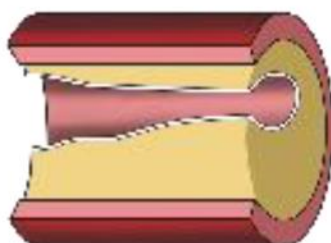
The combination of these tests helps detect problems—before you have symptoms and while you and your doctor can still take action...so you can keep doing the things you love.



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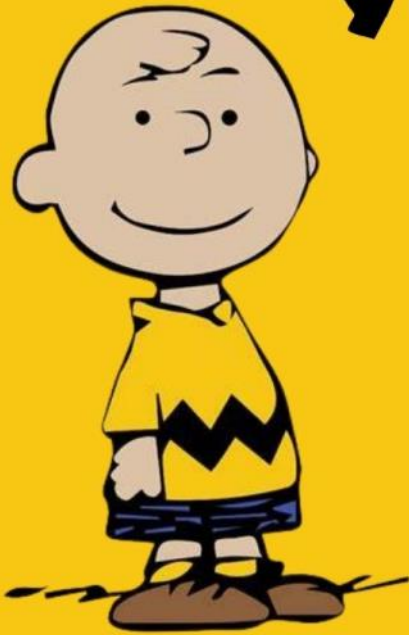
When: Thursday February 1, 2024

**Where: First United Methodist Church
206 S Hopkins Ave Titusville FL 32796**

To register for your appointment and to receive the special discount, please call toll-free **877-792-8479** or visit LLSA.SOCIAL/HC

Scan here





YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN

AUDITIONS

Tuesday, January 2nd @ 6pm
Wednesday, January 3rd @ 6pm

First United Methodist Church
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321-269-7631

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January 2024

First United Methodist Church





Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 New Year's Day —OFFICE CLOSED— 	2 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:00pm Stud. Min. Sm. Group 6:00pm Charlie Brown Aud.	3 9:00am Patchwork Friends 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 5:30pm We Gather 6:00pm Charlie Brown Aud. 6:30pm Crosspointe Reh.	4 10:00am Ladies Day Out	5 1-3pm Food Pantry	6 7:30am Garden Club 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
7 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	8 9:30am Kids Playtime 10:00am Sara Fernandez Bible Study	9 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:00pm Stud. Min. Sm. Group 7:30pm Broadstreet	10 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 6:30pm Crosspointe Reh.	11 9:00am PEO Meeting 4:00pm Leadership Team Mtg. 6:00pm Celtic Christmas Reh.	12 1-3pm Food Pantry	13 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
14 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:00am Coffee Fellowship	15 MLK, Jr. Day —OFFICE CLOSED— 	16 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:00pm Stud. Min. Sm. Group 7:30pm Broadstreet	17 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 6:00pm Crosspointe Reh.	18 10:30am Retired Teachers 6:00pm Celtic Christmas Reh.	19 1-3pm Food Pantry	20 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
21 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	22	23 2:30pm Sit & Fit 6:00pm Stud. Min. Sm. Group 7:30pm Broadstreet	24 9:00am ADK 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 6:30pm Crosspointe Reh.	25 9:00am PEO Mtg. 5:30pm Conn. Kids Xmas Conert	26 1-3pm Food Pantry	27 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
28 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	29	30	31			

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First United Methodist Church

206 S. Hopkins Ave
Titusville, FL 32796

Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.

Worship Services: 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 8am – 4pm, Monday - Friday
Closed from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Phone: (321) 269-7631

Fax: (321) 269-8359

E-mail Address: office@fumctitusville.com

Website: www.fumctitusville.com

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1st UMC Ministries

OUTREACH

Food Pantry	Shoe Ministry
Community Breakfast	Good Shepherd <i>(Funds to help the community with bills & other needs)</i>
Bags of Grace	Christmas Store
Community Garden	Cuba Missions <i>(Santa Cruz Methodist Church in Holguin, Cuba)</i>
Stop Gap Community Dinners	
Patchwork Friends	
School Outreach <i>(Apollo Elem., Madison MS, Andrew Jackson MS, Astronaut HS, & Titusville HS)</i>	

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Evensong Services	Handbell Choirs
Celtic Christmas	Special Concerts
Church Choir	Holiday Cantatas

FAMILY MINISTRIES

Children’s Ministry	Rock the Universe
Youth Ministry	Summer Youth Camp
Open Play <i>(1st Monday, safe playtime for parents & kids)</i>	Youth—Longest Day of Your Life
Theater Programs <i>(Children & Adult)</i>	Fall Festival
Vacation Bible School	1st Wednesday Dinners
	Bus Ministry

NURTURE MINISTRIES

United Women of Faith	Bible Studies
Sit & Fit	

