

# The Bulletin

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## A Christmas Message from Bishop LaTrelle Easterling

Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling | Episcopal servant, Peninsula-Delaware & Baltimore-Washington Conferences

*Beloved,*

*I was recently in a meeting where the following beautiful prayer was offered. It resonated deeply. It simultaneously captured and spoke to the depth of exhaustion, pain, trauma and lament so prevalent among us today. It also answered a question we didn't realize our souls were asking, "How does a weary world rejoice?" This is not the first Advent and Christmas season when this question was relevant, and yet it has a different profundity this year. May this prayer speak to your heart as it did mine, and may it remind you that even in the darkest of nights, Hope shall be born!*

Loving God, in your constant presence with us, we lift our eyes to you and ask,  
How does a weary world rejoice?

How does a world, weary in the realities of war, poverty, violence, division, and despair,  
find a way to rejoice?

In your constant presence among us, a connectional people,  
we turn to you, tired, anxious, doubtful, grieving ...  
and you receive us.

In your loving presence among us, a beloved community,  
we turn to you, longing for joy, inspiration, healing,  
hope...and you receive us.

In your unfailing presence with us among friends, strangers, allies, or foes,  
help us to remember we have stories of hope ... we must tell those stories.  
Help us to trust that seed-planting actions of justice will bloom in the spring despite a hardened winter ground ... we must act.  
Help us to pray without ceasing for children, youth, and adults who live in fear and the immense grief of overwhelming losses, whose eyes bear witness,



night and day, to unimaginable violence and inhumanities...we must never forget them.

Loving God, in your constant presence among your people and all of creation,  
Open our eyes, lest we forget that Holy Night, when a world long laying "in sin and error, pining,"  
received the gift of our Savior's birth that brought it to its knees to "hear the angel voices."  
Help us to remember that with our Savior's arrival among us "souls felt their worth,"  
and out of despair weary souls rejoiced at the breaking of a "new and glorious morn."

How does a weary world rejoice?  
With gratitude and assurance, that you, as our Loving and ever-present God, are  
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, forever and ever.  
Amen.

May God bless you and bring you joy.  
Blessings and peace, this Christmas and always,  
Bishop LaTrelle Miller Easterling

*Prayer inspired by A Sanctified Art's Advent resource, "How Does a Weary World Rejoice?" and words from the first verse of Oh, Holy Night, Placide Cappeau, 1847, translated by John S. Dwight. (Public Domain)*

# Another birth story: 240 years ago on Christmas Eve

*From a video by John Strawbridge, Lovely Lane UMC, Baltimore*

In 1874, every Methodist preacher in America left their homes and their parish on Christmas Eve, which is something that could not happen today. For them, the important place to be was in the church, forming a denomination, dealing with the business that it took to create a church that would serve the people.

All the preachers in America, about 86 of them at the time, met at the Lovely Lane Chapel on Christmas Eve to form a new denomination. They met in conference for 10 days, established a Discipline, a Book of Worship, they ordained preachers, and they set aside Asbury as the first superintendent.

It was 10 days of debates and struggles and accusations and reconciliations, and all the kinds of things that we do as Methodists, which is beautiful in its own way. This church of ours is not something that was handed down from on high, but those



people – all those lay people – all came together to create a new faith expression to serve God. It's so important that we realize that we are not an audience, we are the church. We are expected to continue the work of a church established 240 years ago on that Holy Christmas.

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## Creating Faith

Not all people are created to be artists, but God does entrust each person with the task of creating their own life. Created in the image of a creator God, the world becomes our canvas, and nothing is more artistic than how we love people.

But at Wesley Seminary, the founder of the Luce Center for Arts and Religion, Catherine Kapikian, who recently had her mural of the Last Supper dedicated in the refectory, issued a sacred

challenge, calling on people of faith to create art – to put their imaginations to work and express their faith by making something interesting.

The arts, she said, provide “meaning-making opportunities” to explore the mystery of how God reveals God’s self.” Each person, she asserted, bears the divine image. “Creative capabilities are divinely given to every person as a birthright.”

And therein lies the challenge. In this new year, pick up a paintbrush or a camera, put your fingers to the piano keys or sewing machine, begin to tap your toes, write a poem, sculpt some clay, begin at once to live – echoing God’s call to creation.



*“Creation is a process that is still happening and we’re in on it! We are a part of this endless creativity of God.”  
– Richard Rohr*