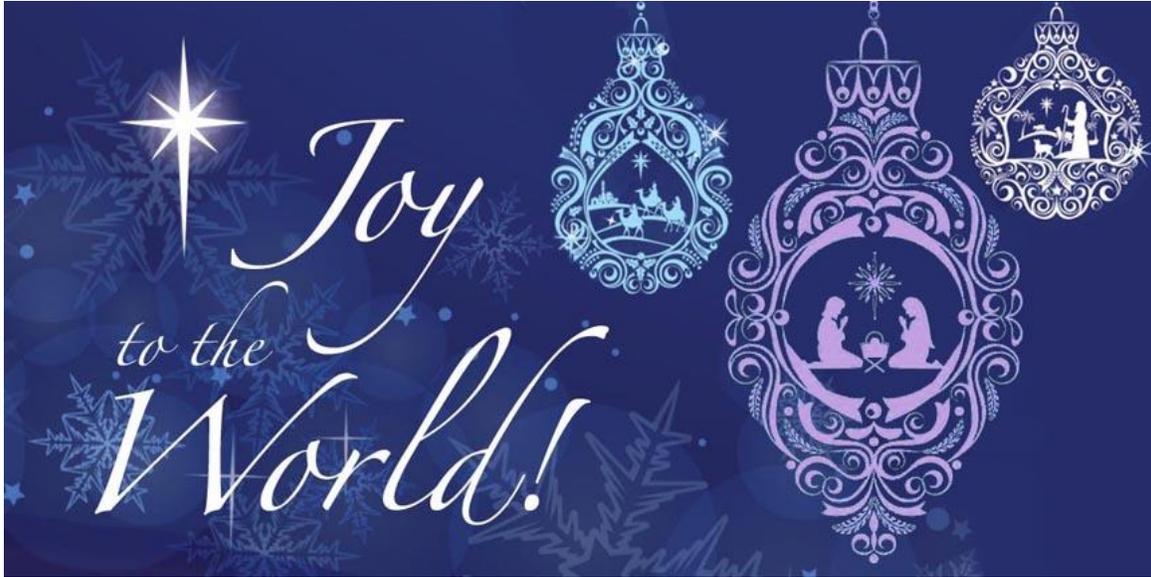


Sunday
December 13, 2020



Performance: Celtic Woman Live At The Helix In Dublin, Ireland (2013)

My favorite Christmas song - wow! There are just so many of them. I can tell you my least favorite Christmas song without even having to think about it - *Santa Baby* - but my favorite is much harder. A short list would include:

There's a Song in the Air - first carol I learned to play on the piano.

Do You Hear What I Hear - I love the way our choir anthem builds and the story it tells.

Rock a Bye, My Dear Little Boy - From when my children were babies.

Venite Adoramus - first "different" Christmas carol I learned in children's choir.

Silent Night - such fond memories of singing this carol at midnight with our candles flickering in the dimly lit sanctuary.

O Come All Ye Faithful - probably my very favorite, though I'm not sure why. It might be because I love to sing the soprano descant on the 3rd verse.

But this year, I choose ***Joy to the World***. Saying that 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us is an understatement. Back in January who would have thought we would not be worshipping together for the better part of the year! On the plus side, most of us have remained healthy and have maintained our connections with our families and friends, but nevertheless it has not been easy.

If you regularly attended Sunday morning worship services at Monumental during the 2019 Advent season, you probably remember the weekly skits from the Advent candle wreath group. When Pastor Celeste first asked me to portray the third Advent candle, I said sure, thinking it would be like any other skit we've done over the years. But I have to say that playing "Unabashed Joy" turned out to be one of my favorite roles ever. Every Sunday during Advent, I got to don that hot pink boa and express my great joy in life and in the anticipation of the birth of Christ. I got to portray the person I'd most like to be (minus the overacting, of course). My candle character reminded everyone that joy is so much more than mere happiness and that no person, no situation, absolutely nothing of this world can take away our joy because the world does not give us that joy. It abides deep within us and is a gift straight from God. I have needed that reminder so many times this year!

Back in January, in lieu of making New Year's resolutions which I never manage to keep, I chose three words as my mantra for the year: serenity, gratitude, and joy. Whenever I felt overwhelmed, which admittedly was

often, I would meditate on those three words and feel a calm and peace flow through me. The joy part was sometimes the hardest to find, but it was also the most important. It was and is a reminder that this too shall pass; that God is in his heaven, and all is right with the world (or will be anyway).

My wish for you, my friends, is that you may feel Christ's joy during the Advent and Christmas seasons and throughout the coming year. Take some time to revel in that unabashed joy that lives within you, then sing ***Joy to the World*** as loud as you can on Christmas morning! I'll be singing it with you.

Psalm 30: 4-5

*Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.*

*For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.*

*Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.*

Wendy Roane