



[TOP](#)

# Faith Influenced Titanic Band 99 Years Ago

APRIL 15TH 2011 BY NEWS

Faith Influenced Titanic Band 99 Years Ago

*By Joey Butler,  
Special To The ShowMe Times*

Since 1955, April 15 has signified Tax Day in the United States — a pretty tragic date in our minds. But prior to that, April 15 always marked an even larger tragedy: the sinking of the RMS Titanic.

This year marks the 99th anniversary of the famous shipwreck that claimed almost 1,500 lives, and as the centennial draws nearer, interest in the event is ramping up.

A recently released book by music journalist Steve Turner detailing the lives of the bandmembers cites the Methodist heritage of bandleader and violinist Wallace Hartley and cellist John Wesley Woodward, and speculates how their faith influenced their decision to play till the last.

“[Hartley’s] moral character and his personal assurance that death was not the end must have stirred his bandsmen,” In “The Band That Played On,” Turner wrote: “[Hartley’s] moral character and his personal assurance that death was not the end must have stirred his bandsmen. Together as a band under Hartley’s leadership, they transcended their personal limitations.”

Wallace Hartley was raised in Colne, England. His father, Albion Hartley, was

choirmaster and Sunday school superintendent at Bethel Independent Methodist Chapel. Perhaps a foreshadowing of things to come, it was choirmaster Hartley who introduced the hymn “Nearer, My God, to Thee” to the congregation.

Colne had deep ties to Methodism, although its introduction to the movement wasn't the best first impression. Several times John Wesley visited the mill town, which had a tough reputation, and was always met with opposition and, in some cases, violence. During one visit, he was met by an angry mob, and one of his helpers was thrown to his death off a bridge.

However, Methodism was eventually embraced in Colne, and almost 10 Methodist chapels sprang up there.

Born in 1878, young Wallace studied at Colne's Methodist day school, sang in Bethel's choir and learned violin from a congregation member.

Less is known about the band member with the most “Methodist” name — John Wesley Woodward — but the cellist was raised in the Methodist tradition, and his father was an officer at Hill Top Methodist Chapel in West Bromwich, England.

### **That fateful night**

The Titanic sailed from Southampton, England, but its band was hired in Liverpool, making them, behind The Beatles, maybe the second-most famous band to emerge from that port city.

Hartley was among three of eight Titanic musicians who were engaged to marry in the summer of 1912. Sadly, like many of his band mates, Hartley's intent was to make this his last sea voyage and return home to concert work instead.



Owing to the contract they'd signed with their Liverpool management, the musicians were considered second-class passengers, rather than part of the crew. Therefore, they were not under the order of the captain.

When the ship struck the iceberg around 11:40 p.m. on April 14, the band would have already finished playing for the night. Yet, something led them to gather up their

instruments and head to the first-class lounge. One survivor later claimed that, as she passed the men, one of them told her they were “just going to give them a tune to cheer things up a bit.”

“No one knows for sure why the band played,” Turner said. “We do know that Wallace Hartley once told a friend about the power of music to prevent panic. My feeling is that he was a person of great moral authority as well as a born leader, and therefore his wish at that time was passed on to all the men.”

Hartley’s was one of only three musicians’ bodies to be recovered and identified, and the only one returned to his home. He was given a hero’s welcome as his funeral procession drew a crowd of 40,000 — almost twice Colne’s population at the time — and several memorials were crafted in his and the band’s honor.

### **Urban legend?**

The two most popular beliefs surrounding the Titanic band are that they played until the ship went down, and their last song was “Nearer, My God, to Thee.”

Because no definitive eyewitness accounts exist to prove either, even those who have studied Titanic history disagree. And survivors had, in some cases, completely contradictory details about whether the band was playing, where they were playing and what song they were playing.

Once the band was playing on the deck (they began their last performance in the first-class lounge), it’s not known how the two pianists would’ve participated, as there weren’t pianos on deck. And once the boat began to list, it would’ve been difficult for the cellists to continue to play seated.

But Phillip Gowan, a Titanic historian, thinks the band did, indeed, play on.

“From all the accounts I’ve either read, or people who were there that I’ve interviewed, I do think the band played till the end,” Gowan said. “Most of the survivors that were in an area where they could’ve heard did claim that they heard the band playing.” Turner said, “I think they played for as long as they could. There were some reports of them playing while the water began to engulf them and others of them eventually packing their instruments into cases.”

As for the last song the group performed, no one can agree, all survivors are now deceased and no living person will ever know for certain. Since their goal was to keep spirits up and keep passengers calm, a hymn typically reserved for funerals may not have been the best choice. But once their outcome was certain, who knows?

“It’s more likely that they played a French waltz called ‘*Songe d’Automne*.’ The most reliable accounts I’ve heard mention that song,” Gowan said.

“Wallace Hartley once told a friend that if he was on a ship going down, the best thing he could do would be to play a hymn like ‘*Nearer, My God, to Thee*,’” Turner said.

“One of the most convincing accounts I read, by one of the sailors, was that at the end, there was a lone violinist playing ‘*Nearer, My God, to Thee*.’ I suspect that was Wallace Hartley.”

**Photos Above:** #1: *The musicians of the Titanic.* (A UMNS web-only photo collage by Kathleen Barry)

#2: *A crowd of 40,000 lined the streets of Colne, England, to witness the May 18, 1912, funeral procession of Titanic band leader Wallace Hartley.*

*\*Butler is editor of young adult content, United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn.*

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 15TH 2011 BY NEWS

<https://showmetimes.com/Blogpost/uifk/Faith-Influenced-Titanic-Band-99-Years-Ago>

[Go to post](#)



More from ShowMe Times:

TOP

# Spring's Beauty

APRIL 07TH 2011 BY NEWS

Spring's Beauty

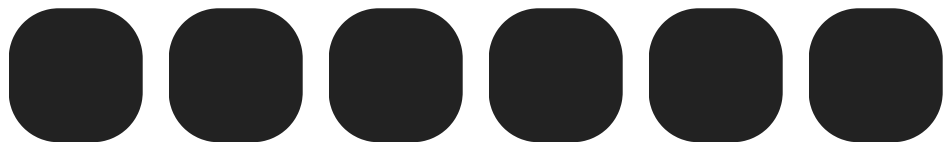
**"Flowers appear on the earth;the season of singing has come,the cooing of doves is heard in our land."**

*Song of Solomon 2:12 (NIV)*

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 07TH 2011 BY NEWS

<https://showmetimes.com/Blogpost/uie2/Springs-Beauty>

[Go to post](#)



More from ShowMe Times:

[TOP](#)

# Church News: April 8, 2011

---

APRIL 07TH 2011 BY NEWS

Church News: April 8, 2011

## **New Parent Class Launches at FBC**

First Baptist Church in Dexter is starting a new Sunday School class for parents of teenagers.

The Parents of Teenagers class is for any parent of a teenager. The class will be studying the same curriculum that the teens are studying on Sunday and Wednesday nights.

On the first Sunday of every month the class will devote a little more time to communicating about upcoming events. Parents of teens are invited to “drop in” if they wish.

The class will launch on Sunday, May 1 and will meet in the Conference room across from the offices. Hope to see you there!

The First Baptist Church of Dexter is located at 11 West Castor Street in Dexter.

## **First United Methodist Prepares For Palm Sunday**

The First United Methodist Church in Dexter will begin Holy Week on Sunday, April 10 with Palm Sunday and a Children’s Processional with Palms. All children and invited to participate in this exciting tradition reenacting Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

The church will continue the Palm Sunday celebration following the 10:30 worship celebration with a potluck dinner. The church will provide meat, rolls and bread, and families are asked to bring vegetables, casseroles, salads and /or desserts.

The First United Methodist Church is located at 501 South Walnut Street in Dexter.

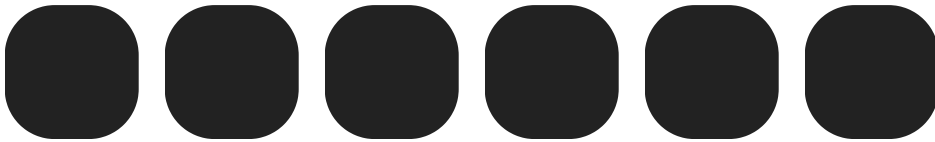
*The ShowMe Times gladly accepts submissions for the Church News each week. Churches are invited to submit news of their church, church groups and upcoming events to:*

*amiller@showmetimes.com or call the ShowMe Times at 573.624.7469*

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 07TH 2011 BY NEWS

<https://showmetimes.com/Blogpost/uie0/Church-News-April-8-2011>

[Go to post](#)



More from ShowMe Times:

**TOP**

## Excitment Builds For 'Hope Epidemic'

APRIL 07TH 2011 BY NEWS

[Excitment Builds For 'Hope Epidemic'](#)

*By Geoff Posegate  
Special to the ShowMe Times*

Can you feel the energy in the air around the Hope Epidemic on April 30?

The Hope Epidemic is an awesome opportunity for us to actually practice the grace of God in Jesus Christ through acts of service and kindness. Join with 1000 other volunteers who will be "Jesus-with-skin-on" for the people of our region.

God is using the HOPE EPIDEMIC to move us powerfully and joyfully into our mission field. As of today, we have over 500 people committed and/or registered for this amazing day. If you haven't signed up yet, [CLICK HERE](#) and get your FREE t-shirt (first 1000).

**THIS WEEKEND:** This weekend we'll continue our series titled, "THE CAUSE WITHIN YOU." What is God's "Macedonian Call" for you? What is the cause for which God has called you and equipped you? What is your contribution to leading people in new life with Jesus?

If you were in worship last weekend, and you have an idea about your Macedonian Call, bring back the slip of paper with your call written on it. If you're still thinking and praying about the cause within you, or if you misplaced the response sheet for "The Cause Within Me," another one will be supplied in worship this weekend, if you choose to use it. On Palm Sunday weekend, April 16-17, we'll assemble all the responses of those who choose to return them, and discover some of the Macedonian calls of our congregation.

**MEAL A WEEK:** One cause that God has placed before all of us is *A MEAL A WEEK FOR MOZAMBIQUE*. In the weeks leading up to Easter many people are giving up a meal a week, and putting the money they would have spent on that meal (say, \$10 a week) aside to assist the people of Mucocane, Mozambique. The people in this poverty-stricken community want to build a well to provide fresh, safe water to the people of Mucocane. The cost of the well is around \$10,000. On Easter weekend we'll offer our individual gifts for this project, and we'll announce results on May 1. This challenge will prevent illness and save human lives. Make the sacrifice and join in this effort!

**PIANO'S FEATURED:** This weekend, Traditions (9am) worshippers will be blessed with the best in piano music. Prior to the start of worship, the musicians of the "Hallelujah For Spring" piano concert have graciously agreed to play portions of their concert. Five beautiful baby grand pianos are now in our sanctuary for worship this Sunday, and for the Hallelujah For Spring at 7pm on Saturday, April 9, and at 1pm on Sunday, April 10. The ten pianists for this event include Mary Beaver, Terry Sapp, Judy Nickell, and Bonnie Stewart from First United Methodist Church.



After what seems like a long wait on 2011's calendar, Easter weekend is coming soon. Plan now to make your own journey with Jesus to the cross by participating in the following worship opportunities:

\* April 21 - MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP (7pm @ Sanctuary). This service recognizes Jesus' last meal with his closest followers, prior to his arrest, trail and execution - the original "last supper." You will have the complete experience, including the bread and cup... and foot-washing, for those who are willing!

\* April 22 (noon @ First Baptist Church -1101 North Main, Sikeston). COMMUNITY GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE, Provided by the Sikeston Area Ministerial Alliance April 22 - FIRST UNITED METHODIST GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP (7pm @ Sanctuary). Commemorating the death of Jesus. This is in many ways the hardest of all worship services, yet one of the most important! There is no resurrection without first facing the crucifixion.

\* April 24 (7am @ First Assembly of God Outdoor Facility - Ingram Street north of the Salcedo Road Intersection) EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE, provided by the Sikeston Area Ministerial Alliance.

\* April 23-24 - RESURRECTION CELEBRATION! SATURDAY - Chapel @ 5pm, Journey @ 6pm. SUNDAY - Traditions @ 9am, Journey @ 11am.

I know you'll agree that these are very exciting times @ Sikeston First UMC! I hope to see you in worship.

***Geoff Posegate is the senior pastor at the First United Methodist Church in Sikeston. The church's website is <http://www.thefunchurch.org>***  
***[/url\_new]***

LAST UPDATED ON APRIL 07TH 2011 BY NEWS

<https://showmetimes.com/Blogpost/uidv/Excitment-Builds-For-Hope-Epidemic>

[Go to post](#)



More from ShowMe Times:



SUBSCRIBE TO "CHURCH NEWS"

**ShowMe Gold Sponsors**