



"Preserving tradition with imagination"

May 2017 Publication

Table of Contents:

Did we overdo Holy Week and Easter Day?

David Sinden

page 3

Self-care for the Church Musician

John-Westley Hodges

page 6

A Note from Jessica Nelson

page 8



Did we overdo Holy Week and Easter Day?

David Sinden

Something has been gnawing at me through Lent, and now that we're finally on the other side of Easter it's time to speak it aloud:

Did we overdo it?

I think 99% of churches are entirely closed the day after Easter. And this is probably as it should be.

We had a full Holy Week with all the proper services: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Great Vigil of Easter. And we even did a few extra ones (Tenebrae! Stations of the Cross! Holy Communion with Autoharp, or whatever instrument we happened to think would work best!).

But more than that, many places that do not otherwise have them will implement daily Eucharists in Holy Week.

And this seems really good until the Monday after Easter. The problem, you see, is this: Easter is a Big Deal.

In the Episcopal Church, the Book of Common Prayer offers a collect (prayer) for every weekday of Easter Week, just as it does for Holy Week.

Here's the collect for Easter Monday:

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we who celebrate with reverence the Paschal feast may be found worthy to attain to everlasting joys; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Easter is not just one day; it's a season. And the Church, in her wisdom, seems to want it to begin with a great big week of celebration.

So why do parish churches that go out of their way to offer daily Eucharists in Holy Week fail to do so in Easter Week? Am I missing something? (And yes, I know there are places that admirably celebrate Holy Communion every day.)

Where are our big festivals in Easter Week? Concerts? Evensongs? Special services? Puppet shows? Anything?!

We say that we are an "Easter People" and yet Easter Week finally rolls around and what do our churches do? Well, the first day we close, and then for the rest of the week? Not much.

It's pretty quiet around the church the week after Easter Day. Choirs have the week off and typically just show up to sing some less demanding music the following Sunday. The clergy take a holiday if they can, and parishioners generally know better than to ask a lot of a church staff that has given 110% and left it all out on the field.

So, while I applaud our collective obsession with Holy Week, I have to ask again: was it too much? If we truly have nothing left for Easter Week and the Easter season then I have to posit that it was.

The theologian and former Bishop of Durham N. T. Wright believes that Easter should be celebrated fully. In his book *Surprised by Hope* he writes:

"We should be taking steps to celebrate Easter in creative new ways: in art, literature, children's games, poetry, music, dance, festivals, bells, special concerts, anything that comes to mind. This is our greatest festival. Take Christmas away, and in biblical terms you lose two chapters at the front of Matthew and Luke, nothing else. Take Easter away, and you don't have a New Testament; you don't have a Christianity... This is our greatest day. We should put the flags out."

And this is what has been gnawing at me. What are we doing to celebrate Eastertide? I mean *really* celebrate it? Note that Lent is only 40 days. Easter is longer, and it's longer for a reason.

It is the week of weeks. It is roughly one-seventh of the year. It is the Church's sabbath festival.

A few years ago I attended a conference called "American Sarum" at Christ Church, Bronxville, New York, which looked in detail at the "Sarum Rite," the particular way the Eucharist was celebrated in Salisbury, England. As part of this liturgy, there were a series of prayers said by the clergy and other participants in the sacristy before the service began, and again after it ended. One of the clergy participants related that the Sarum Rite was so intense that he felt that he really needed this period ritual preparation beforehand and decompression afterward.

Is this not like the liturgical year and our observance of Easter? It seems to me we do a pretty good job observing Lent, and we certainly know how long it is. But how well do we observe Easter once it arrives? Do we really know that it's longer than Lent? Do we believe that the full season of Easter is worth celebrating once it arrives?

Wright again:

But my biggest problem starts on Easter Monday. I regard it as absurd and unjustifiable that we should spend forty days keeping Lent, pondering what it means, preaching about self-denial, being at least a little gloomy, and then bringing it all to a peak with Holy Week, which in turn climaxes in Maundy Thursday and Good Friday...and then, after a rather odd Holy Saturday, we have a single day of celebration. ...Easter week

itself ought not to be the time when all the clergy sigh with relief and go on holiday. It ought to be an eight-day festival, with champagne served after morning prayer or even before, with lots of alleluias and extra hymns and spectacular anthems. Is it any wonder people find it hard to believe in the resurrection of Jesus if we don't throw our hats in the air? Is it any wonder we find it hard to live the resurrection if we don't do it exuberantly in our liturgies? Is it any wonder the world doesn't take much notice if Easter is celebrated as simply the one-day happy ending tacked on to forty days of fasting and gloom?

So, is it a question of proportion? Did we really overdo it when it comes to Holy Week? to Easter Day? Or does the Church just need to work harder to reclaim an "Eastertide imagination"?

David Sinden
Organist & Director of Music
St. Peter's Episcopal Church, St. Louis, Mo.
dsinden@gmail.com



Self-care for the Church Musician

John-Westley Hodges

As church musicians or ministers working for a church, often we give everything we have to our parish and forget to take care of ourselves spiritually and emotionally. I have a lot of friends and colleagues who put their whole heart and soul into their church work. That means that every day of their lives they are giving their all to their parish and often forget to give to themselves—this is a problem; eventually, you will get burned out or get your feelings hurt. In a field where we are celebrated for putting our heart into everything we do, we usually are not celebrated when our feelings get hurt. My goal with this article is to start a conversation about self-care: what do you do in your life, and how it has helped you get through the good times and the bad times? Also, what could we do better in our lives to ensure that we are taking care of our needs while still giving all we need to give to our parishes?

I would like to stress how important it is that everyone has someone they trust to speak to about what is going on in their life. Whether this is a therapist or a good friend, it is vital that you have someone in your life to whom you can vent and tell your truth. I am very fortunate to have both. Having a therapist has been a lifesaver for me as she constantly reminds me of the bigger picture. Life is too short to focus on the small stuff; I have learned to take a step back and look at the bigger picture, and I usually realize how small the issue truly is. However, I am not perfect, and I still stumble and get in my head—and—that is okay!

Having a circle of local friends that are in different fields and are in various walks of life is vital. Church musicians are known for basically living at the church. With all our office hours throughout the week and the rehearsals trying to perfect every note, we lose sight of life outside our vocation. We live and breathe the church year and work very hard each week to bring beautiful music to provide an authentic and meaningful worship experience. Having a group of friends outside of this is critical and can be a breath of fresh air.

Finding ways to worship when you are not the leader is essential. Every week we are in ministry roles where we are the leaders of worship. If you never leave that space and find a space where you can get fed, how can you experience God at the level we want our parishioners to? Worshipping without being a leader allows you to be vulnerable and allows other to lead you. This is tricky as it is hard to find times to go to other services when we are always working. Make time!

I say these things not to say I do not like my job or I am overwhelmed, I say all of this because I know it to be the way I will be able to stay in my ministries for years to come. Self-care is like tires on a car. If you care for them, rotate them, and service them, they will last much longer than if you just use them every day without special attention. I want to be directing and leading music when I am eighty-years-old, and I know the only

way that will be possible is if I take care of myself and keep my mind, body, and soul healthy. I love the work I do in the Episcopal Church, and I would not trade it for anything; but, over the years I have learned how to take my off days, focus on my self-care, and truly grasp a solid relationship with God.

I hope that if you read this, it will get your wheels turning as to what you can do better in your life for self-care and what you could do to help others. We are all in this together, it truly is one Church, and we must support, encourage, and sometimes cry with one another. Peace my friends in Christ, take care of yourself and keep making beautiful music!

John-Westley Hodges
Director of Music Ministries
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Peoria, IL

Co/Editor, Church Music Forward
jwhodges@stpaulpeoria.com



A note from Jessica Nelson

Church Music Forward Board Member and
Director of the Mississippi Conference on Church Music
and Liturgy

Dear conferees, friends, and fans of
the Mississippi Conference:

I hope this finds each of you well!

I'm the director of the Mississippi Conference on Church Music and Liturgy (<http://www.mississippiconference.org/>), which has been convening for over 40 years now to help church musicians and clergy develop practical skills for parish ministry. Our conferees come from all over the country to Gray Center to sing, pray, and learn from an incredibly gifted faculty of musicians and liturgists. This summer's conference will run from July 25-30.

I am particularly excited about this year's Conference. The faculty includes

[David Sinden \(Organist and Director of Music, St. Peter's, St. Louis, Missouri\)](#)

[Brad Hughley* \(Organist and Director of Music, St. Paul's, Indianapolis, Indiana\)](#)

[The Rev. Charlie Dupree \(Rector, Trinity, Bloomington, Indiana\)](#)

**Brad is also a Mississippi native!*

This year's theme is **Moments and Days: Awake to God's Call**. The Rev. Dupree writes:

“Seek God’s presence continually,” says the Psalmist (Psalm 105:4). In today’s culture, ‘continually’ seems like a tall order. How do we seek to be in God’s presence continually? Perhaps Frances Ridley Havergal was on to something when she wrote the following words:

Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise (707, Hymnal 1982).

Life is a collection of moments and days. As artists and musicians, we help make each one more beautiful and meaningful. During our time together, we will offer our moments and our days. We will offer our hard work, our laughter. We will offer our best notes and our worst notes. We will offer our lives to God’s service in the assurance that our ministries of art and song will awaken the world to the love and the beauty of God.

You'll sing with the conference choir, conducted by David and Brad, two of the finest musicians working in the Episcopal Church today. We've got some great music planned for the Thursday Choral Evensong and Sunday Eucharist. We'll also offer a full lineup of liturgies. (Don't worry - there's also plenty of time for rest, play, and networking.)

There are two different registration options: Participants can register for the weekend (Friday afternoon - Sunday morning) or for the entire conference (Tuesday afternoon - Sunday morning.) Please see the registration details on the website above.

Feel free to share this email with other clergy and/or musician friends. Please visit our website (<http://www.mississippiconference.org>) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/MississippiConference>), and don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

We can't wait to welcome you to the Mississippi Conference this summer!

Peace,

Jessica Nelson
Organist/Choirmaster and Asst. for Liturgy
All Saints Episcopal Church, Tupelo, MS
jessica@allsaintstupelo.org



Interested in writing an article or submitting music in future publications? Please email us at editor@churchmusicforward.com for more information! We would love to have you share your gifts with the Church Music Forward family.