



"Preserving Traditions with Imagination"

June 2015



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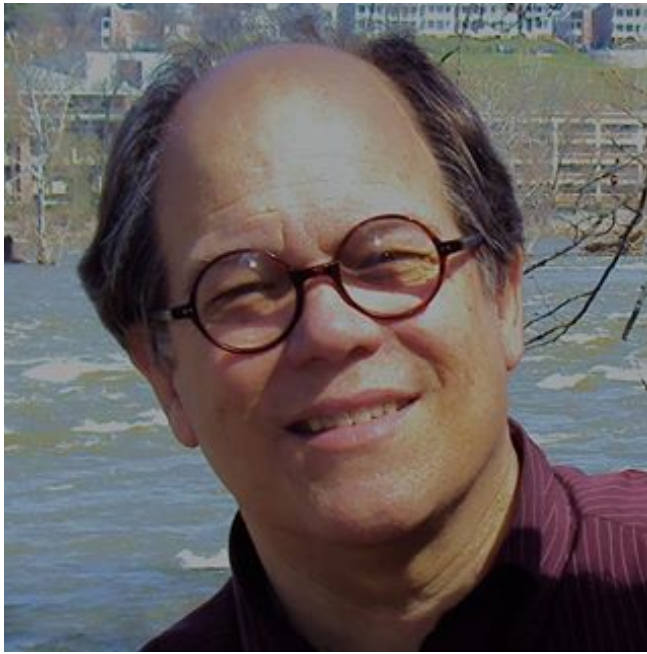
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Choral Singing in the Small Parish

William Bradley Roberts

Most parishes in this country are small—really small. A number of years ago, when a group of us musicians and clergy were starting an organization called the Leadership Program for Musicians Serving Small Congregations, we began to look seriously at statistics on church size. What we discovered was that congregations were smaller than any of us had imagined.

When people started coming to LPM trainings, we would often hear an apology something like this, “You don’t understand. My parish is really small. We only have a hundred and fifty at worship on Sunday.” We would usually assure them that, first of all, no apology was necessary, whatever your

church’s size, but that, second, and more pertinent, an average Sunday attendance (ASA) of a hundred and fifty is anything but small. An ASA of 15-20, on the other hand, might qualify.

Likewise, we’d hear reports of “tiny” choirs of fifteen voices. In fact, the “one-up-manship” of these LPM candidates was actually “one-down-manship,” as they competed over whose choir was smallest. The undisputed winner silenced all comers with this comment, “My choir is eighty years old.” Then, after an appropriate pause, “Her name is Emily.” Gales of laughter ensued, and we realized that the competition was over.

Of course, no parish has favored status based on its largeness or smallness. Surely faithfulness in worship and a commitment to discipleship is of more interest to our Lord, and if we focus on things eternal, will be to us. Often, however, small “family” parishes compare themselves unfavorably to large, “resource” parishes, the assumption being that size conquers all and that no problem is insurmountable for a large parish.

To the contrary, small parishes sometimes have distinct advantages over large ones. For instance, in small congregations you seldom feel anonymous, something large parishes constantly struggle to overcome. The largest parish I’ve served had 3500 members. It was a common occurrence for strangers in that city to introduce themselves to each other, only to discover that they both belonged to the same large parish where they’d never met.

Likewise, choirs in small parishes have some advantages. In a small parish the choir usually welcomes newcomers enthusiastically. It is easier to “break in” to a small choir community, so that you soon feel you belong.

Effective music in parishes, large or small, shares some characteristics. It engages people, heightening the worship of the congregation. It glorifies God and motivates disciples. It facilitates praise that might not be possible on one’s own. Music gives wings to worship.

The new Center for Liturgy and Music at Virginia Theological Seminary recently began its mission to help congregations with their liturgy, music and preaching. Seminars and workshops—both on campus on off—a help line, consultants, and a website <<http://www.liturgyandmusic.com>>—all these exist to

help people find resources and develop skills to enrich worship.

For several years I have been telling seminarians that, when it comes to congregational singing, *participation* is more important than quality. I quickly question them, “Do you hear me saying that quality is unimportant?” They usually answer “no,” as I’d hoped. “That’s right. We can and should try to improve the quality of our congregational singing. Having said that, I far prefer that people jump right in and sing with enthusiasm than to feel that they must reach a level of quality before giving themselves permission to join in singing hymns.”

An analogy might help: when a small child brings a picture he has drawn to his parent and says, “Here, Mom. This is for you,” she will certainly not respond, “Sorry. That’s not very good. Go back and work some more until you have a fine picture, then bring it to me.” No. She responds with generous and grateful enthusiasm. That’s the way God hears our offerings of praise. None of us produces perfect music, so, if we were to wait for perfection, God would never hear our praises at all. Instead God is that generous parent who welcomes our gifts, not our perfection.

Choirs, on the other hand, work regularly to sing skillfully, and I contend that it is neither elitist nor unchristian to strive for the highest level of quality that we can attain. It is choral singing that I wish to address.

One of the challenges that all music ministers face is finding repertoire appropriate to their ensemble. Effective leaders spend many hours looking for choral music that honors the capability of their singers. On the other hand, a good leader also pushes singers on occasion, the result being that the singers enjoy improving their musicianship and learning new repertoire. Few want to sing the same familiar music, year after year, so that it comes to expect nothing of you. Finding the balance between music that is accessible and music that is challenging is meticulously crafted art.

Of course, in some small churches, superb music is no stranger. Some of them produce music that is every bit as advanced and polished as in any large congregation. St. Paul’s, K Street, in the city of Washington comes to mind. At this fairly small parish one hears sublime music, performed at a high level of musicianship. This is because the parish defines fine music as a core value, devoting a higher than usual percentage of their money and time to the music ministry.

Some years ago the Standing Commission on Church Music (SCCM; now the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music) came to realize that music leaders in many small parishes tried to perform¹ music that was overly demanding, attempting to duplicate a model inappropriate to their congregation. This practice tends to intimidate and frustrate singers of modest ability, as well as producing music whose quality is less than we’d hoped. The SCCM discussed several plausible explanations: 1) Music lovers naturally relish the grand, ceremonial music we have enjoyed in large parish churches or Cathedrals, either in person, or on television and recordings. It is understandable that we want to replicate music that is this powerful and moving. 2) Those who have been blessed with advanced training in a music school have thrilled to the sound of advanced repertoire that was entirely appropriate for an auditioned college choir with several rehearsals per week.

The Standing Commission soon came to believe that what were needed were expanded visions—visions that would model music appropriate not to some idealized situation, but to the actual congregation one

¹ Some people bristle at using the word “performance” in church, finding it inappropriate. I disagree. Every endeavor that requires skill has the dimension of performance. Clergy, for example, who don’t believe in a performance aspect to preaching, probably aren’t very good at it.

served. At LPM we learned to say “Small is beautiful,” and we meant it. Likewise, the uncomplicated music, done with passion, can bless the hearts of worshippers.

I am the first to admit that it is not easy to find music that reflects all three criteria: 1) theological soundness, and 2) artistic integrity, and 3) carefully crafted composition, while matching the capability of the small congregation. Most directors in small parishes look tirelessly for simple anthems that exhibit these criteria. Seldom do workshop participants ask me for more complex, demanding repertoire in their reading packets. They might want to perform such music while attending the conference, but most people want to take home superb, simple anthems.

Leslie Casaday, founder of the Mississippi Conference on Church Music and Liturgy, taught me that conference music literature ought to accomplish two goals: 1) there should be superb, robust, demanding pieces for those people whose choirs at home can’t sing them, and who only get to do such music at a conference; 2) there should be accessible music that leaders can take home and perform with their own choirs. Parish music leaders attend conferences for both categories of music: the one for inspiration, the other to build the repertoire of their own choirs. Omit either category, and people leave dissatisfied. Include both, and people usually go home happy.

Are there small churches whose music is wisely selected and presented with artistry that enriches worship? Yes. But this is scarcer than might be expected. What are some guidelines that could improve the quality of music-making in the small parish?

Here are some suggestions for leadership of music in small congregations. You won’t agree with them all, and that’s fine. I offer these ideas simply to begin a dialog.

1. Acknowledge that a level of skill is needed for people to participate in choir. Sometimes, in an attempt to be “pastoral” or egalitarian, we invite anyone who wishes to sing in the choir. While that might seem attractive (even Christian) in many ways, it’s worth reexamining. Most churches would never invite just anyone who wished to do so to design their new church building, or to replace the church’s electrical system, or to preach a sermon. No, these tasks are deemed so important that they demand to be executed only by competent craftspeople.

Therefore, I’ve come to believe in auditions for church choirs. Against the cries of “elitism,” I will ask that, if you were about to have heart surgery, would you allow anyone who felt inclined to take charge? No. Whatever the event, when the outcome is critical, we want the most highly skilled person we can find.

I never say “no” to a person who auditions, but I do sometimes say “not yet.” By this I mean that I will assist people in finding good instructors in voice and musicianship, or, being a voice teacher myself, I also offer help at no charge. If they are willing to devote the time and the work, I will help them achieve their goal of choir membership. When someone dedicates him/herself to such preparation, they are grateful for newly-acquired skills that allow them to sing with confidence. When attained, choir membership means a great deal to such people. It is not pastoral, but condescending, to urge people to do something in which they lack the necessary skill. Nobody is born with musical skill, and everybody can improve.

Excellence begets excellence. Skilled singers in your community might refuse to sing in a choir of lackluster standards, but they will rush toward the opportunity to sing in a fine choir.

1. Establish guidelines for membership, so that people know what is expected. This begins with

attendance. Early in my career I naively assumed that if I simply exhibited enthusiastic leadership, people would respond with commitment. That is asking a lot of human nature. A policy that allows people to come and go promiscuously will not foster respect among choir members, nor will it allow us to “sing with the spirit and sing with understanding also” (I Corinthians 14:15). If people cannot commit to regular attendance, perhaps their calling lies elsewhere. Better a choir of eight passionately committed singers than a choir of forty unpredictable people, who are cavalier about attendance, yielding music of dubious quality.

Again, this attitude sometimes strikes people as unduly demanding. But which of us can imagine a fine sports team whose coach sets no expectations for regular practice. It simply doesn’t exist. If athletics are worth a commitment, how much more our praise of the God of heaven and earth deserves our best efforts. I learned from a wise friend that people usually have standards slightly less than the one the leader sets. If these standards are sufficiently high, then even a performance that falls slightly short of its goals will be remarkably effective.

To be sure, there are people who like to sing a bit, but who aren’t interested enough to gain skills or to make a commitment. I have no quarrel with such folks and am happy to try and help them find such a singing opportunity. As much as anyone, I sometimes enjoy community sings where enjoyment takes precedence over result. If it is just occasional fun through singing that people want, then such opportunities can be found.

1. Pray together. Allow time for concerns to be shared, and then dedicate part of rehearsal time to prayer. The sacrifice of rehearsal time will yield an abundant result. In several choirs I’ve led, we sang portions of the service of Compline at the close of rehearsal, including time for sharing specific prayer needs. People sometimes remarked that they came to expect this as part of their weekly spiritual journey. A deep intimacy develops among people who pray together. It is important, as well, to take moments in rehearsal to reflect briefly on the words of scripture or poetry that we sing. People are capable of deep spiritual insight, and a careful look at the anthem’s words will make singing them far more profound.
1. Get together for fun outside rehearsals. Most singers love parties. Choirs form deep, familial relationships that often last a lifetime. Singers who enjoy each other’s company are also more likely to make a serious commitment to membership.
1. Be diligent about letting people know well in advance what their schedule is and what music will be presented. Unavoidable changes happen, but people get a sense of security from knowing what will happen and when.
1. Employ humor in rehearsal. Everyone enjoys laughing, and often productivity will increase with a little lightening of the atmosphere. It’s important not to strain for humor. Those who aren’t good at it should encourage others to offer humor instead, or else should find a humorous comment in print or online. Humor should never be barbed, and should not target members of the choir. Sarcasm that seeks to embarrass or correct someone is likely to backfire. Genuine humor on the other hand highlights our humanness and brings joy to rehearsals.
1. Integrate musical and vocal instruction into the rehearsal, not in long, extended soliloquies, but in short, targeted statements. From Paul Salamunovich, long-time conductor of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, I learned that a choral rehearsal can be a voice lesson as well as tutoring in the rudiments of music. With one choir I founded, I expected people to come to a pre-rehearsal, thirty-minute class in voice and musicianship. It is no coincidence that this choir grew

consistently in a way that none of my others choirs did. Most people seemed to enjoy feeling that they were gaining new skills.

1. Plan a long-term project that demands more of your choir than their regular week to week work. A major project—a cantata, oratorio, Evensong, joint concert or service with another choir, singing for an audience other than your own congregation—these build energy among choir members. A simple change of venue can offer new perspective on our common work.
1. Ask clergy to visit rehearsal occasionally to say a brief word about the role of the choir in worship, to pray with the choir, or simply to thank singers for their hard work. Everyone likes to be appreciated especially by the leaders.
1. Send out regular messages through Facebook, email or postal mail, complimenting people on something that went particularly well. This must be genuine. People know when they're being flattered, and sincere appreciation will go much further than empty praise. It is not only gracious, but also good pedagogy to affirm good work.

Choral singing in church can offer a lifetime of fulfillment for those who engage in doing it. It can also great enrich the praise of the congregation and heighten the impact of worship. Best of all we demonstrate our gratitude toward our God who has richly blessed us.

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My Life as a PianOrganist

John-Westley Hodges

Music has been a part of my life since I was child. “Oh How I Love Jesus” was the first hymn I played in church at the age of nine and I have been playing in church ever since. At the age of fifteen I accepted my first paid position as a church pianist and director of music for a small Southern Baptist Church. At that time I had no idea the journey that God had in store for me, but almost seventeen years later I wouldn’t change a thing.

My family does not miss church, at all.

We were taught any time the doors were open we went to church. Up until my small sabbatical last year, I can count on two fingers how many Sundays I have missed working in a church. I have always left one job and started the next the following Sunday.

I hope the title of the article caught your attention and has you curious about the content. At the age of twenty-three I was fired from a Baptist Church on the accusation of being a homosexual. The feelings I felt during this process are unexplainable. I felt betrayed by God, because until this point I thought God was the Baptist Church. I know that is a bold statement, but I feel as though my whole life I was brainwashed into the beliefs that I believe and never was allowed to truly find my beliefs on my own.

After stepping down as the Director of Music with my badge of shame I felt lost, hopeless, and unemployed. I felt that I would not work in a church again as I truly felt God was responsible. At the time I was working at a music store teaching private music lessons, and I saw a poster for an Episcopal Church looking for a Choirmaster. I knew nothing about the Episcopal Church, so I did a little research. After some digging online I learned that the Episcopal Church was a little more accepting of homosexuality.

July 2007 I called St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church and spoke to Rev. David Knight about the position. He asked me to come for an interview and I agreed. One of the first questions I asked in the interview was what was St. Patrick’s stand on homosexuality. David is an amazing man of God, but he was also raised Southern Baptist just like me. I could see in his eyes that he understood the pain I had experienced and explained to me that it was simply a non-issue.

St. Patrick’s was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and was meeting in a Gym when I applied for the position. David invited me to work with the choir on a Wednesday Night rehearsal and I fell in love with this small group of people. If I remember correctly there were six people at the rehearsal. The only instrument they had was a very cheap Casio keyboard that was given to them by a volunteer that was on the coast doing recovery work.

After accepting the position we purchased a very lovely Roland Digital Piano and I served the parish for seven years. In 2009 Bishop Duncan Gray confirmed me and I have never feared

being open about my sexual orientation again. For the first time in my life and in my career I felt at home. I owe the world to David for believing in me and allowing me to come into a job and learn, create, and worship with a group of people that loved and accepted me for who I was, not who they wanted to make me be. Thank you David.

So, “My Life as a PianOrganist”... I am a pianist, I started lessons when I was six and took my last lesson when I was twenty-two. I have built a career around the piano and love the instrument more than anyone will ever understand. The Episcopal Church is very organ driven and in most parishes the organ is the foundation of the music in worship.

The first seven years of my Episcopal career I did not have to play the organ, at all. The first time I truly played an organ was last year in my time at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church. I often joke with one of my best friends, Jessica Nelson, about playing the organ and how it scares me because I don't know what is going to happen when I press a button. I know that sounds crazy, but I understand the piano so well that I know what is going to happen before it does and I know how to correct imperfections of an instrument very fast. When I am behind an organ I get so overwhelmed with fear that a sound is going to come out that is unwanted!

Overcoming obstacles has been part of my life since I was a kid and I have been determined to not let the organ get the best of me. I force myself to practice as much as I can and seek help from colleagues often. Martha Burford and Jessica Nelson are two people that inspire me and motivate me to push forward and to improve my abilities.

Being a pianist in an organist world is very overwhelming at times. I have asked questions to colleagues before and received weird looks in return and sometimes have been laughed or made fun of for not knowing something. It truly hurts my feelings when people think less of me because I don't have the same understanding about a subject as they do.

When someone comes to you for support, advice, help... take the opportunity to be one with him or her. Love them, support them, and most of all encourage them. You should be honored that someone thinks highly enough of you to seek your support. Knowledge is very powerful, but the ability to give it to another person is free and easy.

As of now, I am working on a Bach Prelude and Fugue and loving it. I truly love the organ and think it is a fabulous instrument and can't wait to be better than I already am. I have tons to learn and tons of practicing to accomplish, but I will get better and I will understand the instrument more.

If I could plant one seed with this article it would be, your words and actions are powerful. Think about how you would want to receive knowledge and advice from others and try giving it in that way, a way that is filled with love, comfort and God. We are all on the same mission; if we work together we can accomplish more.

Prayer:

Lord of Heaven and Earth, be with us in our everyday lives as musicians in Your church and allow us to be an instrument of your praise. Give us the strength to be a light for our communities and a hand for our colleagues. Allow us the patience to always have Your attitude when we are working with others and grant us peace and satisfaction in our daily jobs and offerings.

Scripture:

Luke 6:31:

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” –

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***On Hymnals, Hymn Tunes, and Hymn Texts
& Some New Hymn Texts for you, courtesy
of Christopher L. Webber***
Martha Jones Burford

**Part One: On Hymnals, Hymn tunes, and
Hymn texts**

In my Episcopal parish, *The Hymnal 1982*, *Wonder, Love, and Praise*, and *Lift Every Voice and Sing* have lived side by side in our pews since 1998. While all three hymnals have many well worn pages, *The Hymnal 1982* serves as our home base, and I am still “surprised by joy” in new or fresh encounters with its treasures. In fact, Ellen Johnston, Director of the Center for Liturgy and Music at Virginia Theological Seminary; Kevin Barger, Director of Music Ministries for Epiphany

Lutheran Church, Richmond, Virginia; and I have enjoyed presenting workshops such as “Discovering Hidden Gems: Mining the 1982 and ELW Hymnals.” Through exuberant exploration of these hymnals, in rooms with colleagues and congregations, we have experienced eureka moments, rich discussions, and thoughtful debates: all confirming the depth and breadth of hymnody contained in those blessed volumes.

Pause for discussion: John-Westley and I want, always, to invite conversation and response from you who read CMF’s work. So, my first questions are *How do you explore hymnody? If the 82 Hymnal or ELW or another traditional hymnal serve as your primary source for hymns, how far do you venture into them, and how do you lead others through their works? In what ways do you creatively call upon their resources?*

The above questions could fuel a blog or outstanding exchange on CMF’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/churchmusicforward/>). We would love your shared thoughts and suggestions.

One interesting way to explore both hymn tunes and hymn texts in the *Hymnal 82* is by taking note of the meter. At the risk of explaining things folk already know, let me point out the little numbers or letters at the end of hymns. At the right hand bottom under the hymn’s information can be found information such as *LM, CM, SM, 10 10. 10 10. 10 10*, et cetera. This “code” explains the meter (number of syllables) of the lines in stanzas of the hymns. (A brief description of some of the titles of meters lies at the end of this section, as well as a link to a nifty site with more explanation and index of tunes and meters in the *82 Hymnal*.)

So, let’s say you want to mix it up some. Here’s a scenario: You are offering an evening contemplative service during Lent in conjunction with the parish Lenten series focusing on Justice and Reconciliation as Christians. You feel drawn to Henry Scott Holland’s text “Judge eternal, throned in splendor,” but the German chorale paired to the text #596 doesn’t fit your vision of a contemplative hymn sung unaccompanied at the end of the service. You note the 87.87.87 meter of the hymn and pore over the hymnal and metrical index for other tunes that fit the meter and see that *Pange lingua* at #329 and *Picardy* at #324 offer tunes fitting 87.87.87

that reimagine the singing of the text in a way that enhances the worship you are planning.

Pause for discussion: What texts and tunes not paired in your hymnal(s) have you teamed up for a different experience of both tune and text? How was the endeavor received?

Before moving on to Part Two (new texts), here is a *brief* description of some of the more frequently found hymn meters.

CM (Common Meter): a pattern of 86.86, generally with second and fourth lines rhyming, sometimes also the first and third

LM (Long Meter): a pattern of 88.88, generally with the second and fourth lines rhyming, often also the first and third

SM (Short Meter): 66.86

CMD (Common Meter Double) 86.86.86.86

LMD (Long Meter Double) 88.88.88.88

That's just a start, and there are many variations, but here's a site that offers some more description and a Metric List of Hymn Tunes: <http://www.drshirley.org/churches/hymns-metric01.html>

Part Two: Some New Hymn Texts for you, courtesy of Christopher L. Webber

Christopher L. Webber (<http://www.clwebber.com>) is well known to many Episcopalians, singers, and readers! A graduate of Princeton and of the General Theological Seminary, Christopher has written hymns included in major hymnals. His authorship extends to many books including *Dear Friends: Letters of St. Paul to American Christians*, *The Beowulf Trilogy*, *Welcome to the Episcopal Church* and *Re-Thinking Marriage*. Some of his most recent activity includes preaching at Christ Church SeiKoKai, a historic Japanese congregation in San Francisco. Christopher's daughter and granddaughter sing in the choir at my parish, and I've had the joy and privilege of participating in liturgies in which he has preached and celebrated. In response to thoughtful conversations and correspondences, I approached Christopher about some of his new hymn texts, and he has generously shared five with CMF. They are included in this issue and are for any of us to explore and offer in our worship. I had especially asked him to consider texts we might use in this Ordinary Time between Pentecost and Advent.

Pause for Discussion: We invite you to pair his texts with tunes *and* to let us know what tunes you chose or wrote. We would love for you to contact us (Facebook page link above at editor@churchmusicforward.com) and Christopher, info@clwebber.com to share what you have paired; maybe some will be inspired to write new hymn tunes for his texts and share those, as well!

In the new music and offerings of this issue, you will find Christopher's five hymn texts. The first three are ones useful to any Sunday in the season after Pentecost. Christopher writes, "Of the first three texts, two have suggested tunes though one needs to be revised and the third is LM so tunes are certainly available. But new tunes would certainly be welcome!" The next two texts are specific paraphrases of texts for Proper 12B (July 26) and Proper 17B (August 30). Christopher points out that both of these paraphrases are SM in meter, and also that they were paired with new tunes in a collection of paraphrases *Hymns from the Bible: 2000*, Theodore Presser Company. (Available through

Pause for Discussion: Please join us in thanking Christopher for his gift. Please join us in thanking all of the writers and composers generously sharing their thoughts and works with all of us here. We are grateful to these “servants who seek through art and music to perfect praise offered by [God’s] people on earth,” (*Book of Common Prayer*). To all who have shared with CMF, thank you. To all who take time to read and give feedback, thank you.

In dulci jubilo,

Martha Jones Burford
Co-Editor, Church Music Forward
Director of Music, Holy Comforter Episcopal Church





How Might We use Music to Bless People?

Beau Surratt

That was question I had never been asked before, and I was immediately intrigued and wanted to know more about what motivated its asking. I was asked this question in the context of a job interview at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Park Ridge, IL, the parish I just this week began serving as Interim Minister of Music, and I immediately knew that I was in the right place. I responded by confessing that I had never before been asked that question, had never thought about music ministry in quite

that way before, and that I thought it was exactly the question that leaders of the church's song need to be asking.

Blessing is at the heart of what God does and we do in the context of the Eucharist. We offer our selves, our souls and bodies and a portion of the gifts we have been given along with the gifts of bread and wine and we bless them – God blesses them. God blesses us and we are transformed to be more and more Christ's body so that we, that Christ, might be a blessing to the world. With all of this blessing going on, it seems meet and right that the music we offer to the glory of God and the edification of God's people should bless people as well.²

A few months ago I posted the following on Facebook, "When choosing music for liturgy, one must not only concern oneself with things liturgical, musical, and theological. One must also concern oneself with things pastoral, and sometimes this needs to win out over the other three." I received several responses to this statement – some enthusiastically supportive, some needing clarification around the intent of the statement, and others that made me feel a bit like I was being accused of heresy. I think both the statement and the various responses relate intimately to the question of how we might bless people with music, particularly in the context of liturgy.

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." 1 Corinthians 13:1, NRSV

Sometimes, in an effort to conform to either an actual or simply a perceived standard of liturgical, musical, or theological orthodoxy, we church musicians forget that the God we serve loves the world, God loves each of us so much that God was willing to "take frail flesh and die."³ While theological, liturgical, and musical integrity is most certainly important, conforming to overly stringent standards of orthodoxy does not in any way cause God to love us more. God delights in our existence and, I believe, delights when our souls soar to the heights of heaven as we sing a robust hymn, listen to a motet, play a banjo, clap on beats 2 and 4, and enjoy a Vierne organ symphony. It is this delight of God that we are called to show forth in our music ministry. You may notice that all of this involves and is about people. All ministry – liturgical, musical, etc. involves the people whom God so loves and our ministry is to be grounded in the love of God's people. This is people work – pastoral work. If we make the

² To paraphrase Martin Luther.

³ John Ireland, *The Hymnal* 1982 #458

most pure, sublime, correct music, but have not the love of God's people at the forefront of our work, are we not little more than noisy gongs and clanging cymbals?

With the love of God and God's people at the center of our calling as ones who minister through music our choice of music for liturgy will necessarily focus at least at some level around the pastoral needs of the people with whom we minister. There are times when a certain piece of music may be completely appropriate theologically, liturgically, and musically and completely inappropriate pastorally. This is not to say that any music should be sung that is theologically, liturgically, or musically inappropriate should be sung simply because it might seem to be pastorally appropriate.

Like one of the people who commented on my Facebook post pointed out, there certainly is a (classically Anglican) middle way here. When we prayerfully choose music for our congregations and our choices are theologically, liturgically, and musically grounded AND ever-attentive to the pastoral needs of our people, God takes great delight, we offer to God our most humble and hearty thanks, and the music we offer blesses God and the people with whom we minister.

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Success with Handbell

Jackson Hearn

Do you have handbells at your church? If you do, do you use them? If you don't, why would you want to? Some churches get along very well without them. And if you do have them and use them, are you successful?

Handbells are a unique instrument. Even typing the word on my computer I get that red squiggly line underneath asking "Didn't you mean handball?" No, Microsoft, I mean "handbell," and I mean to play handbells in my Episcopal Church. Then in my mind I imagine the inner workings of my computer spinning, searching,

trying to find a way to make sense of that statement, when all it wants to say is, "That does not compute," as if handbells in the Episcopal church don't make sense. (And much of Anglican musical leadership feels the same way!)

But it does make sense. The use of handbells can add much to your worship and to your music ministry, though it pays to be smart about it.

My first experience with handbells happened one summer in college when I was the children and youth intern for the Presbyterian Church where I was already serving as organist. I was to develop and implement a summer program for children in the parish called "Wonderful Wednesdays." (*I apologize in advance. I was and always will be a sucker for alliteration.*) My minister suggested that I find a way to work handbells into the mix, as the church had three octaves of bells sitting in a damp basement closet. (*Warning no. 1 – that is usually how these things start.*)

No problem, I thought to myself. After all, I was an organ major. How hard could it be? (*At that point, God and St. Cecilia got together and just LAUGHED!*) I pulled out the bells, played around with them, looked at the music that came with the bells, and planned my first rehearsal.

On that first Wednesday in June, I had about five kids gather. (*Warning no. 2 – Be prepared for whatever may happen. I was prepared for twelve children. Five showed up.*) So the kids and I gathered in a circle, sitting on the floor of the room where we were rehearsing, and began to ring the music I had chosen. (*Warning #3 – sitting is not an appropriate bell ringing posture.*) We were stabbing away at the music (literally) when one of the students let go of his bell. I watched it fly out of his hand and bounce across the terrazzo floor. Yes, it bounced, or skipped, much like a flat stone skips across the still waters of a quiet lake, only this was NOT quiet. Miraculously, the bell neither chipped nor cracked. (*Warning #4 – you need to know how to hold a bell correctly before you try ringing it.*) We tried again, but still it didn't go well. It was hard to play a melody with only six bells. "Wonderful Wednesdays" waned and wound up being

“Woeful Wednesdays” instead.

Many years later I was working with another group of elementary and middle school students during a summer music camp. I had seven kids, and four sessions to introduce the art of handbell ringing to them. At the closing concert we performed an example of change ringing and one bell piece. It was a success. Why wasn't it as woeful as those Wonderful Wednesdays were way back when? Answer: Because I had learned from those warnings years ago. I want to share those lessons with you now.

2. Have a purpose.

Just because you have bells does not mean you should use them. You need to have a reason to play those bells. Some people (we call them *consultants*) call this a “mission statement.” My mission at the Diocesan Music Camp was to introduce children to handbells. At my church the youth bell choir exists to give musically talented young people a way to express themselves. You need to have a mission, or purpose, to start or maintain a bell group.

2. Be prepared. Choose music wisely

It would have been helpful had I known at the Presbyterian Church how many children were going to show up. Then I would have chosen music that they could have successfully rung, and early on in the process, too. There are now many publications for small bell groups and young bell groups, such as the “Ring With 6” and “Ring with 8” series published by Hope, and music for twelve bells published by several different publishers. The easiest place to find all this music is on the internet (of course) at www.hanbellworld.com.

2. Have the right equipment

To correctly ring a bell, you need to stand up, and you need a table with proper padding on which to lay the bells when you are not ringing. Duh. It makes so much sense, now. You'll also want some way to hold the music, and gloves to protect the bells from the oil, dirt and grime on the ringer's hand. Again, check [hanbellworld.com](http://www.hanbellworld.com) for their great article, What Do We Need as a New Choir? It will give you a great list of the necessary equipment.

<https://www.hanbellworld.com/articles/newchoir/>

2. Learn how to ring a bell.

You don't ring a bell as if you are hammering a nail in a coffin. It requires a smooth, somewhat circular motion that is better caught than taught. (In other words, you can't just read about it, you need to see it in action.) Again, what would we do without the internet? There is a great series on bell ringing on Youtube, and the first is about basic technique. Check it out. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ug6PfUuEm9Y> Had I seen this before handing little Billy that F⁴ bell, he might have been able to hold it in his hand instead of throw it across the floor. MIGHT HAVE....

2. Be prepared to succeed.

Of course, who prepares to fail? What I mean is this: plan on something that you KNOW will

succeed. I planned on twelve Presbyterian children to show up to play bells. It was predestined that only five would show up, but I didn't know that, so our playing fell flat on its face. Had I chosen something that could have been played successfully with five as well as twelve ringers, we would have felt good about it. Something as simple as randomly ringing bells from the pentatonic scale while we sang *Amazing Grace* or another such tune would have brought about a feeling of satisfaction. Or you could get an instrument to play the melody while the bells ring chords. Hal Hopson has written a great resource that offers a variety of creative ideas for the use of handbells in your congregational hymn singing called The Creative Use of Handbells in Worship (two volumes), published by Hope Publishing Co. Suggestions range from the use of a single bell to a full handbell choir.

2. Appropriately challenge

The more inexperienced the bell ringer, the more they need to play. I didn't say they needed to play more bells (two bells, next to each other in the scale, is plenty to start with), but they need to be active in playing. The more rests there are for players, the more they will check their text messages. (And I am not just talking about children and youth here, either.)

2. Rehearse

Finally, you need to have adequate rehearsal time, especially with inexperienced ringers. While some pieces lend themselves to extemporaneous ringing, it is best for all concerned to be sure of what they are doing. Four rehearsals are the minimum for a new group for a simple piece, though some will need more.

Finally, don't be afraid to use the bells. Start on a small scale, accompanying a plainsong psalm or playing along with hymns. Look at those choir anthems that are written with bell parts that enhance the total sound. Don't think you have to be limited to just performing as a handbell "choir," though many beautiful and effective handbell pieces have been written for choirs of all levels and sizes. Our job is to praise God with song, and to include as many of his people in doing so. Let handbells be one of those glorious ways.

Jackson Hearn

Director of Music Ministries, Good Shepherd Episcopal Church
jacksonhearn@goodshepherdkingwood.org



Broadening our Horizons and Building Community through Music

Elizabeth Blood

How do we improve our service as church musicians? How can we involve more folk in our programs? How might we reach out beyond our walls and connect with the larger community? As church musicians, we all probably ponder these questions at some point. My congregation has annual meetings in June where all of our ministries present annual reports. While the thought of putting this kind of document together inspires some trepidation, it does give me a point of reflection on what we did well and

what could be improved. Last year, one of my overarching goals for 2014-2015 read:

“reaching out to the larger community as Christ’s disciples, through the invitation of music.”

With that in mind, I’ve listed below a few things we’ve done this past year to accomplish that:

Crèches and Carols – In Advent, we host an “open house” where the community and all church members are invited to bring a crèche (nativity scene) for display and note its origin. They tell some fascinating stories! Viewing the displays while eating some goodies offers a fun opportunity to mix and mingle. Then, we have a concert portion where our choirs present some selections. Finally, we end with some carol-singing where all are invited to lend their voices. We also have a mission partner church (an Indonesian Lutheran community) that has joined us in this event, as well. We have loved hearing their rendition of “O Holy Night” with their intergenerational anklung ensemble! It is wonderful for us to gather with them and celebrate their unique heritage and musical traditions while sharing our faith and community as Christian brothers and sisters.

Concert attendance – In February, we were fortunate to have been within striking distance of the Winter Tour of the St. Olaf College Choir 2015: they were singing about an hour from us, in Worcester, MA. I put a note out to the choirs and congregation and we put a group together to carpool down and enjoy dinner and the concert. A wonderful way to encourage community and support great music-making! On a similar note, there was a hymn festival in April (led by the outstanding Mark Mummert – and, once again, in Worcester, MA), so I put a group

together to attend that, as well. At the end of the concert, one attendee commented “I wish that had gone on another hour!” I guess she enjoyed herself!

Handbell festival – In March, several members of our handbell choir participated in a festival, the MA “Spring Ring” (sponsored by Handbell Musicians of America). The festival offered them the opportunity to work with an accomplished director and play with over 200 (!) other ringers. We rehearsed three of the “massed” pieces for a couple of months prior to the festival and also took the opportunity to play these same pieces in worship, so our efforts were particularly fruitful! Another nice thing about this massed ring was that, while you could certainly bring your whole choir, it wasn’t a requirement. Five (of our ten) ringers elected to attend, and we weren’t at a disadvantage that our entire group wasn’t able to participate. We are already planning our return next year!

Beer and Hymns – for those of you that haven’t heard of this phenomenon (perhaps especially well-known in Lutheran circles), this usually involves going outside of a church building (in our case, a local, downtown pub) and inviting folks to sing hymns while partaking of a pint (or a diet coke or what have you!). I first heard of this at a talk I attended by Nadia Bolz-Weber, a prominent ELCA speaker and founding Pastor of House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver, CO. It certainly seemed like something new-and-different (and perhaps a very innovative Evangelical tool) and had caught steam in many congregations throughout the country...so, why not give it a try? And October is an ideal month for such a thing, so that’s what we did. It went SO well, that we reprised it with an Eastertide “Beer and Hymns” in conjunction with the nearby Episcopal Church! In fact, it ended up being a very ecumenical event with members of the Methodist, UCC, and Roman Catholic parishes in attendance. One Catholic priest in attendance is hoping to try it in his parish!

In sum, all of these experiences have allowed us to be enriched by the greater community, and we hope that we have, in some way, been a blessing to them. We have had the opportunity to interact with other people, communities and cultures, even—and to learn from one another’s rich heritages, traditions and experiences. Thanks be to God!

Elizabeth Blood, Cantor**
Christ the King Lutheran Church
Nashua, NH
elizblood@gmail.com

** In case you're wondering about the title "Cantor" (it extends beyond being a vocal soloist) here's a little explanation of the title as it applies to Lutheran musicians: "The cantor is the leader of the congregation's song. The term cantor is the historic designation for the vocation of the Lutheran Church musician. The cantor normally serves as organist, director of choirs and instrumental groups, and teaches, encourages, and nurtures the musical talent of the congregation. The cantor's calling, however, extends beyond the preparation of music for the various services. The cantor takes an interest in the personal and spiritual lives of those with whom he or she works, and is often musically active in the larger community in which the congregation is situated." (from the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians -- Worship Statement)





The following pieces of music have been donated to Church Music Forward for the Glory of God in the use of God's Church. Please feel free to copy and perform these pieces with your church choir. If you are a composer and have a piece that you would like to offer for everyone to use, please feel free to contact us at: editor@churchmusicforward.com. If you would like to print these pieces individually, please visit our website for our database.

Sweet By and By

To my fabulous Mississippi friend, Jessica Nelson

S. Fillmore Bennett

Jos P. Webster
arranged by: John-Westley Hodges

Tempo: ♩=80

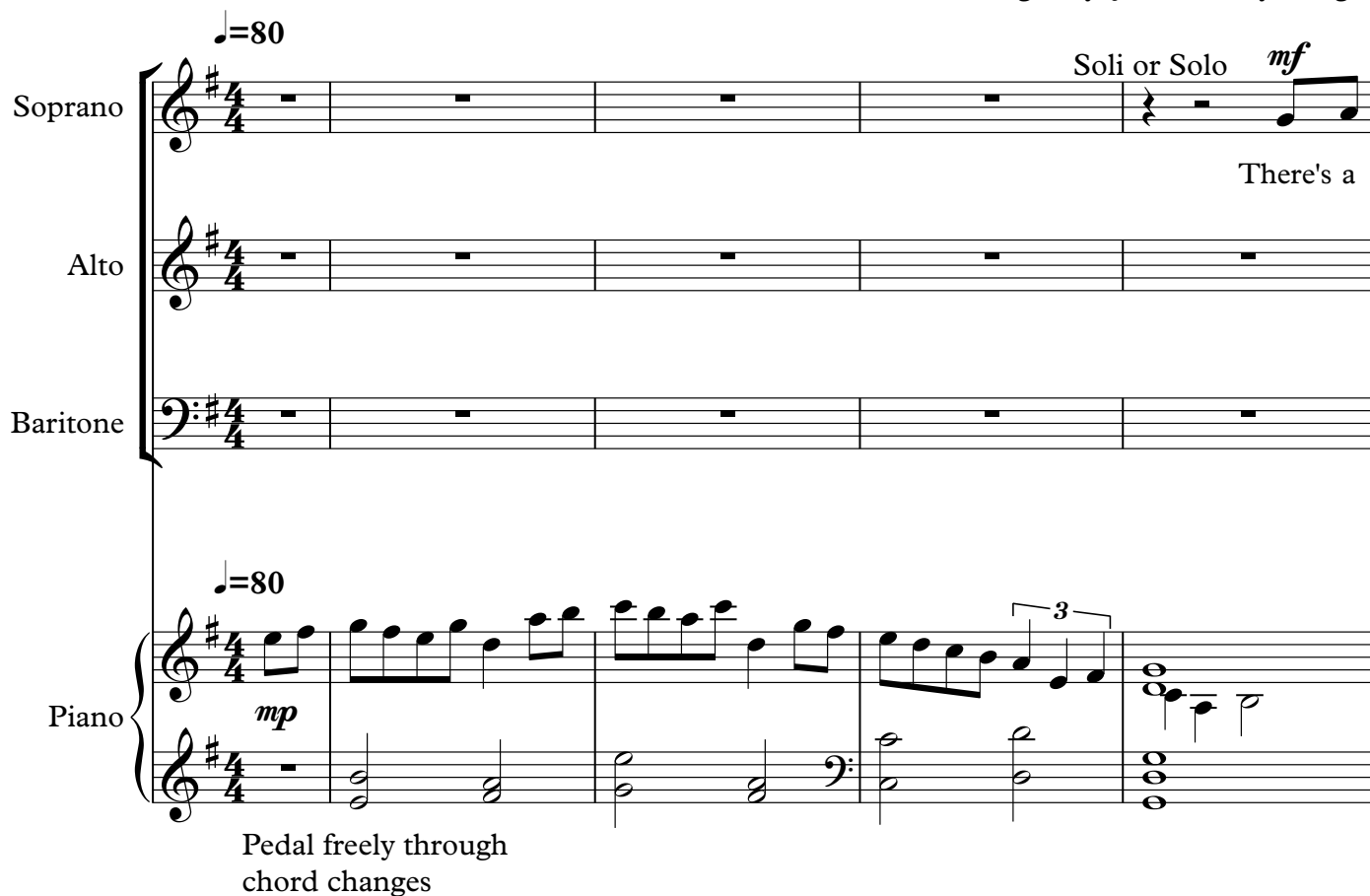
Voices: Soprano, Alto, Baritone

Piano: mp

Lyrics: There's a

Performance Notes: Soli or Solo *mf*

Pedal: Pedal freely through chord changes



6

S. land that is fair - er than day, and by faith we can see it a - far, for the

A.

Bar.

Pno.

10

S. Fa-ther waits o - ver the way. To pre-pare us a dwell-ing place there. In the *mf*

A. *mf*

Bar. *mf*

Pno.

All voices

In the

14

S. sweet by and by, we shall meet on that beau-ti-ful

A. sweet by and by, we shall meet on that beau-ti-ful

Bar. sweet, in the sweet, by and by, by and by, we shall meet on the beau-ti-ful

Pno.

17

S. shore. In the sweet by and by, we shall

A. shore. In the sweet, in the sweet, by and by, we shall

Bar. shore. In the sweet by and by, we shall

Pno.

20

S. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore.

A. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore.

Bar. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore.

Pno.

mp

24

S.

A.

Bar. *Soli or Solo*
mf

We shall sing on the beau-ti-ful shore, the me-

Pno.

mf

28

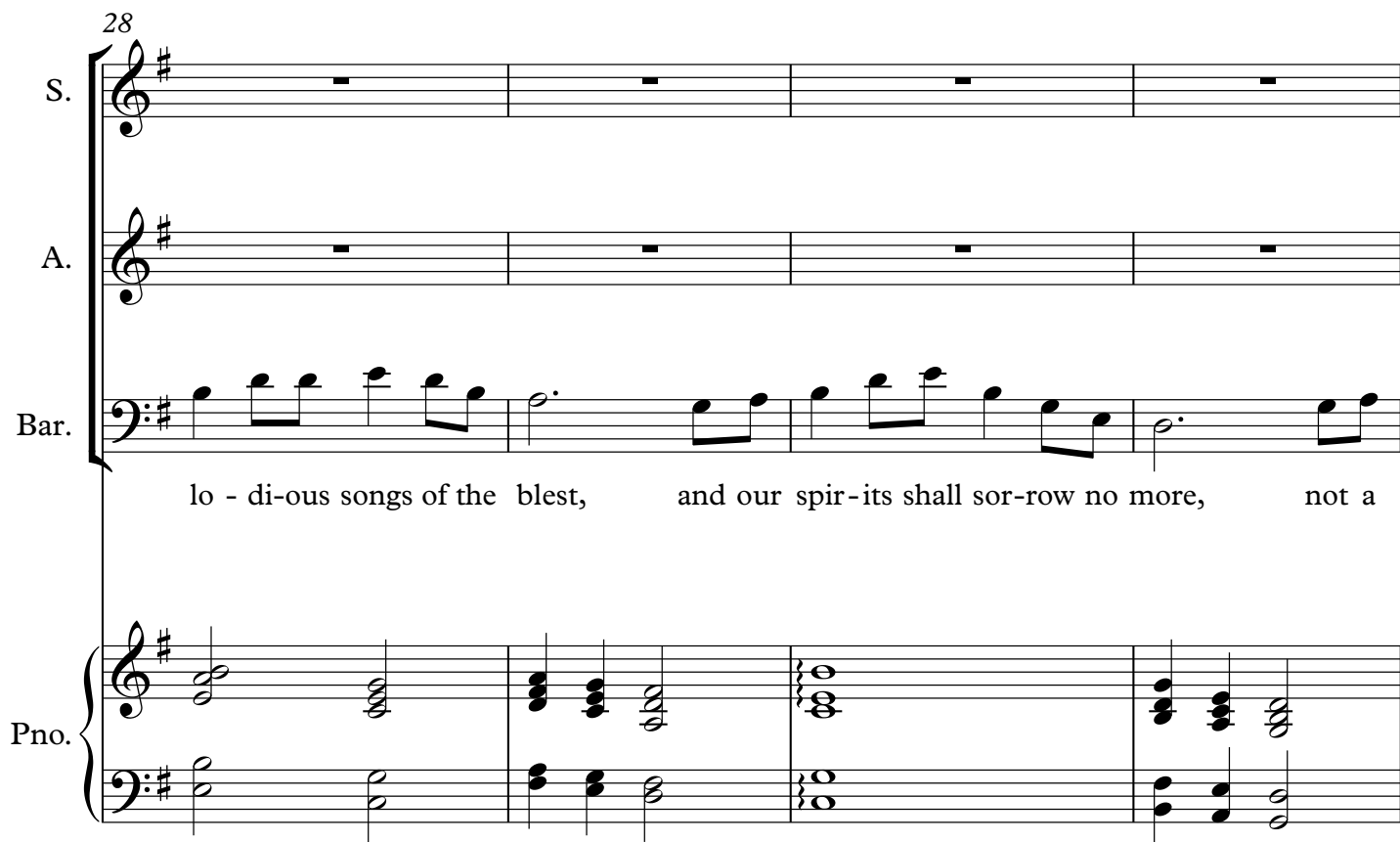
S.

A.

Bar.

Pno.

lo - di-ous songs of the blest, and our spir-its shall sor-row no more, not a



32

All voices
mf

S.

A.

Bar.

Pno.

In the sweet by and by, we shall

In the sweet by and by, we shall

sigh for the bless-ing of rest. In the sweet, in the sweet, by and by, by and by, we shall



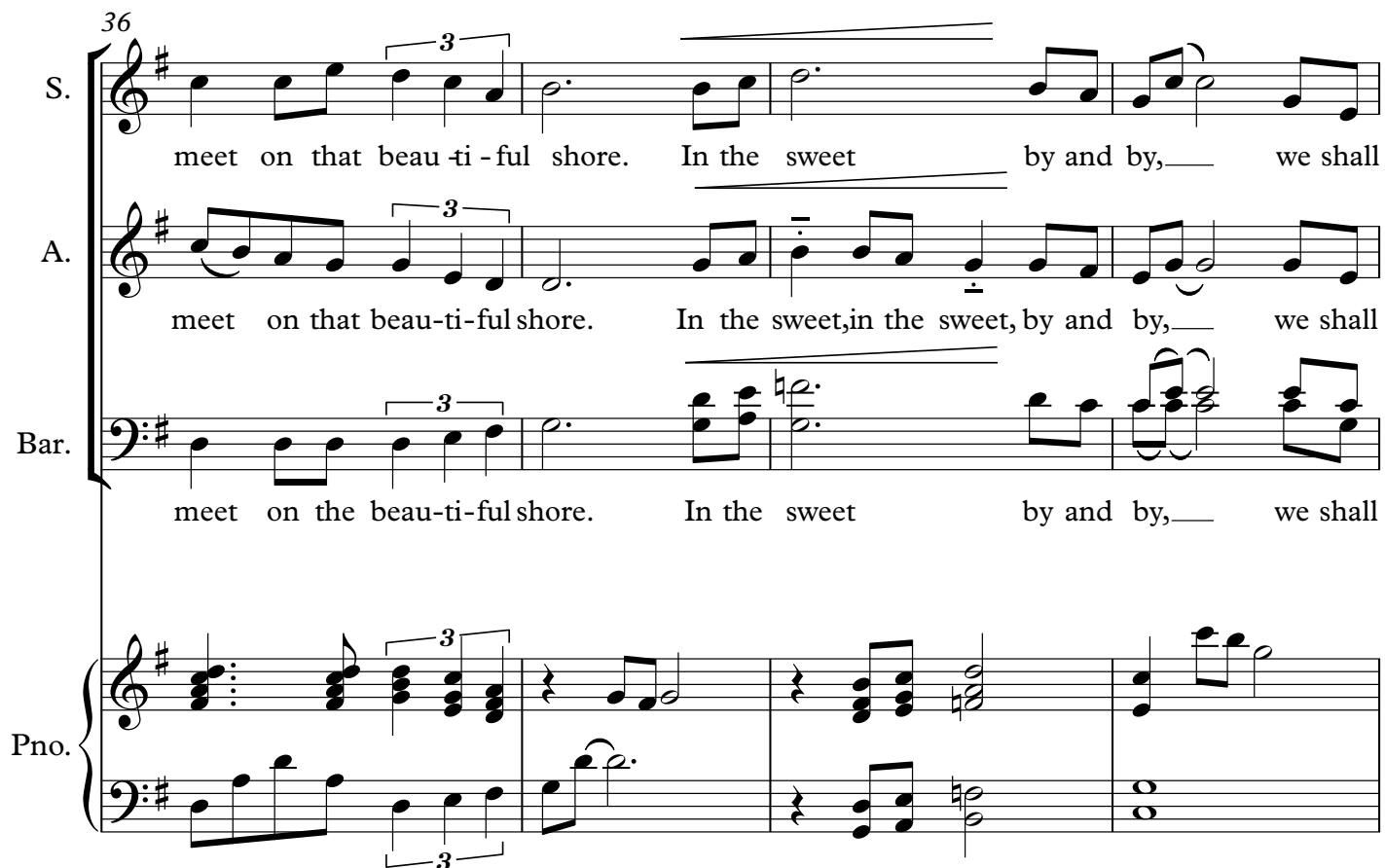
36

S. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore. In the sweet by and by, — we shall

A. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore. In the sweet, in the sweet, by and by, — we shall

Bar. meet on the beau-ti-ful shore. In the sweet by and by, — we shall

Pno.



40

S. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore.

A. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore.

Bar. meet on that beau-ti-ful shore.

Pno.



44 **rit.** **Bold and stately** *f*

S. *f* To our boun-ti-ful Fa-ther a - bove, we will

A. *f* To our boun-ti-ful Fa-ther a - bove, we will

Bar. *f* To our boun-ti-ful Fa-ther a - bove, we will

Pno. **rit.** *mf*

48

S. of - fer our trib-ute of praise, for the glo - ri-ous gift of His love, and the

A. of - fer our trib-ute of praise, for the glo - ri-ous gift of His love, and the

Bar. of - fer our trib-ute of praise, for the glo - ri-ous gifts of His love, and the

Pno.

52

S.

Bar.

55

S.

Bar.

58


S. 
sweet by and by, we shall meet on that

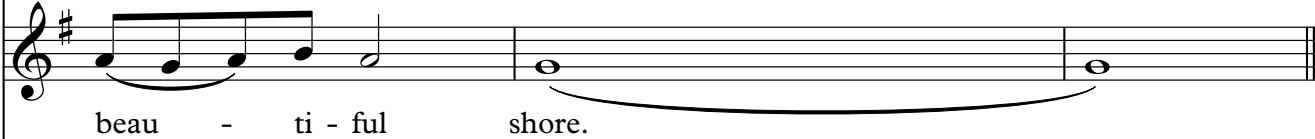
A. 
sweet, in the sweet, by and by, we shall meet on that

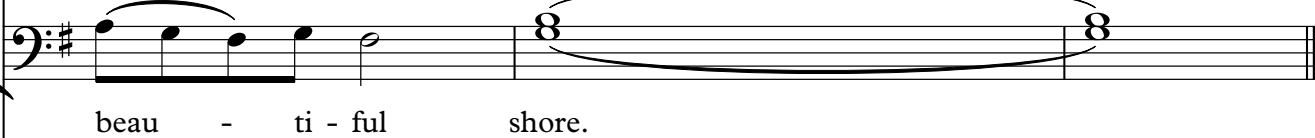
Bar. 
sweet by and by, we shall meet on that


Pno. 


61

S. 
beau - ti - ful shore.

A. 
beau - ti - ful shore.

Bar. 
beau - ti - ful shore.

Pno. 

Ped. 

Lord Have Mercy

Dedicated to my friend Martha Burford for the beautiful friendship we share.

John-Westley Hodges

Slow, with the feeling of moving forward

Soprano




Lord have mer - cy, Christ have mer - cy on _____ me.

Soprano



Lord have mer - cy, Christ have mer - cy on _____ me. _____


Alto



Lord have mer - cy, Christ have mer - cy on _____ me.

5

S.



Give me strength, hope, joy, and com fort when I call_ on You! You are

A.



Give me strength, hope, joy, and com fort when I call_ on You! You are

A.



Give me strength, hope, joy, and com fort when I call on You! _____ You are

9

S.



God, You're the Fa - ther, You an - swer my ev - ery need.

A.



God, You're the Fa - ther, You an - swer my ev - ery need.

A.



God, You're the Fa - ther, You an - swer my ev - ery need. _____

13

S. Lord have mer - cy, Christ have mer - cy when I call on You.

A. Lord have mer - cy, Christ have mer - cy when I call on You.

A. Lord have mer - cy, Christ have mer - cy when I call on You.

Come, Lord and Reign

10.9.10.9

1. Come, Lord, and reign now over the nations,
Let there be justice, freedom, and peace;
Let every movement, party, and leader
Work for the day when warfare shall cease.
2. Come, Lord, and reign now over our commerce,
Let us seek your will in all we do;
So that from every office and work place
We may bring offerings worthy of you.
3. Come, Lord, and reign now over our churches,
Break down the walls that keep us apart
So we may serve you and make your love known,
Worship and praise you with our whole heart.
4. Come, Lord, and reign now in every household,
Banish all discord, selfishness, strife;
Fill all our hearts with patience and wisdom
So we may know your love in our life.
5. Come, Lord, and reign now everywhere, always,
Be present in us in all we do
So that the whole world that you created
May be an offering worthy of you.

Suggested tune: Bunessan (Morning Has Broken)

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Faithful and Sure

9.10.9.10.7.8

1. Faithful and sure, God of Creation,
Calling the world out of darkness to light;
Chaos and law, microbes and moonbeams,
These lead your people to worship in awe,
Source, guide, and goal of all life,
Glory to God everlasting.
2. Faithful and just, God of the prophets,
Calling your people to stand for the right,
Plumbline and sword, justice and freedom,
These lead your people to live by your word,
Source, guide, and goal of all life,
Glory to God everlasting.
3. Faithful and free, life-giving Spirit,
Calling your people to deeper insight,
Wisdom and breath, vision and tempest,
These lead your people from darkness and death,
Source, guide, and goal of all life,
Glory to God everlasting.
4. Faithful and true, Love, Justice, Power,
Calling your people to live by your might,
Sun, cross, and dove, meaning and mystery,
These lead your people to grow in your love,
Source, guide, and goal of all life,
Glory to God everlasting.

Suggested tune: Earth and All Stars (modified)*

*The tune "Earth and All Stars" by David Johnson (The Hymnal, 1982) ties four notes in the second and fourth lines which must be untied for these words.

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Glimpses of Glory
L.M.

1. Glimpses of glory here are rare
Yet, Holy God, in mountain view
And rainbow arc and autumn leaf
Our wandering thoughts are turned to you.
2. In every circumstance of life,
A baby's smile, an athlete's grace,
In those who work for human rights
We see the outline of your face.
3. In all our music, all our speech,
The author's book, the preacher's word,
In drama, film, and poetry
The echo of your voice is heard.
4. More perfectly, we see revealed
In parent's love, in children's joy,
In humble, patient, faithful souls
The image sin cannot destroy.
5. More perfectly in Jesus Christ
That primal image is restored;
We hail the one who died for us
As Savior and our risen Lord.
6. Most holy God, made known to us
In all the evidence we trace,
Grant us at last with all your saints
To see your glory face to face.

Ephesians 3:14-21 (Proper 12B)
S.M.

1. I bow my knee in prayer
Before the Father's throne
By whom the human family
In heaven and earth is known.
2. I pray that God, so rich
In generosity,
Will send the Holy Spirit down
To dwell with power in me.
3. I pray for power to grasp
With all the saints in light
The love of Christ in all its breadth
And length and depth and height.
4. I pray to know the love
Surpassing human thought,
The fullness of the Lord our God
Which Jesus Christ has brought.
5. To God who can do more
Than we can comprehend
Be glory in the church and Christ
For ever without end.

St. James 1:17-21 (Proper 17B)
S.M.

1. Each good and perfect gift
Comes down from God on high,
In whom there is no shade of change
And no inconstancy.
2. God, by the word of truth,
Has given us new birth
That we should be an offering,
The first fruits of the earth.
3. Therefore, dear friends, be slow
To speak in bitterness
For human anger cannot serve
To work God's righteousness.
4. So lay aside the sins
Which now infect your soul;
Receive with meekness God's own word
Whose power can make you whole.

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For Bryan Earle

A Song of Christ's Goodness

Anselm of Canterbury [text in public domain]
(Antiphon from an anonymous Celtic prayer)

Thomas Lee

With breadth and freedom , *mp*

Antiphon *p* My Christ, my Christ, my shield, my en - cir - cler, Each

with growing intensity 5 *mf*

day, each night, each light, each dark, Be

9 *f* *poco rall.* *mp*

near me, up - hold me, my trea - sure, my tri - umph! //

near me, up - hold me, my trea - sure my tri - umph! My

near me, up - hold me, my trea - sure my tri - umph!

13 *rall. e dim. to end* *molto rall.*

Christ, my Christ, my shield, my en - cir - cler.

This antiphon also works well as a short motet without the chanted canticle.

There are several possibilities for the verses with harmony:

1. Full choir chanting text
2. Solo cantor continues with choir on hum, oo, etc.
3. Solo cantor continues with soft organ accompaniment (using box for dynamics)

No. 3 has become my preferred method - with it's possibilities for expressiveness. I have been using two cantors - M/F alternating every 4 bars.

2

17 *Cantor*
mp warmly - *expressivo*

Jesus, as a mother you gather your peo - ple to you; you are gentle with us as a mother with her chil- dren.

19 *mf* *p*

Often you weep over our sins and our pride, tenderly you draw us from ha - tred and judge - ment.

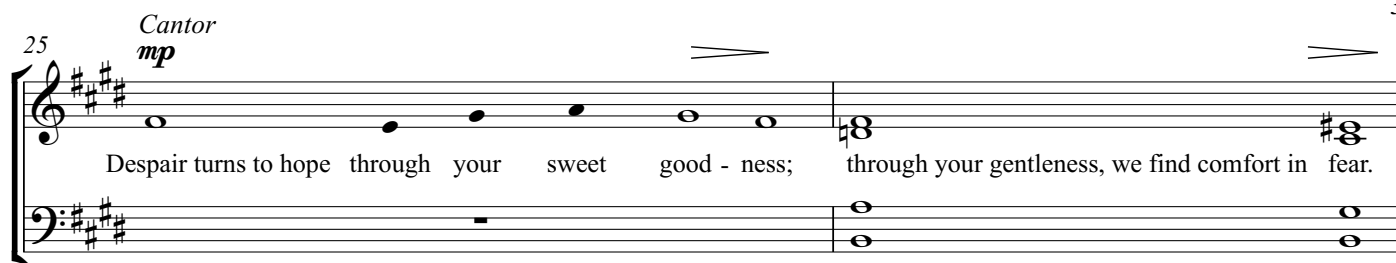
21 *Cantor*
mp

You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.

23 *mf*

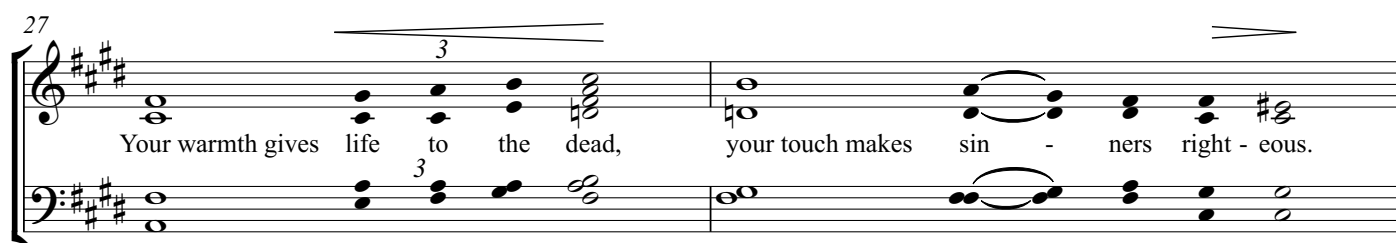
Jesus, by your dying we are born to new life; by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.

25 *Cantor mp*



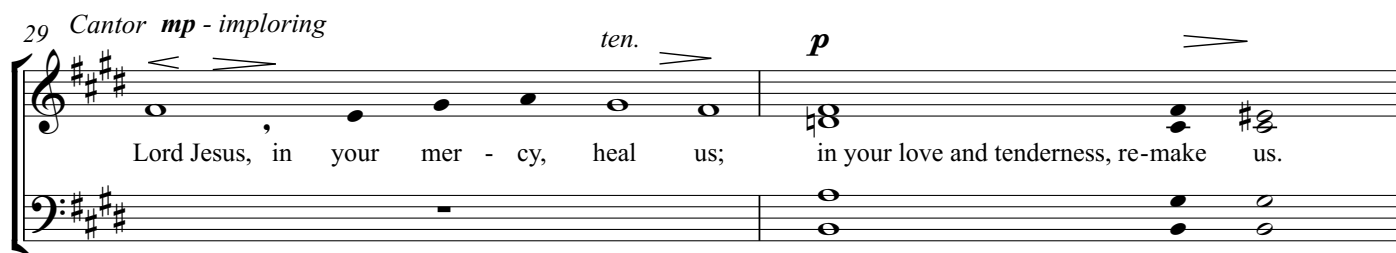
Despair turns to hope through your sweet good - ness; through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.

27



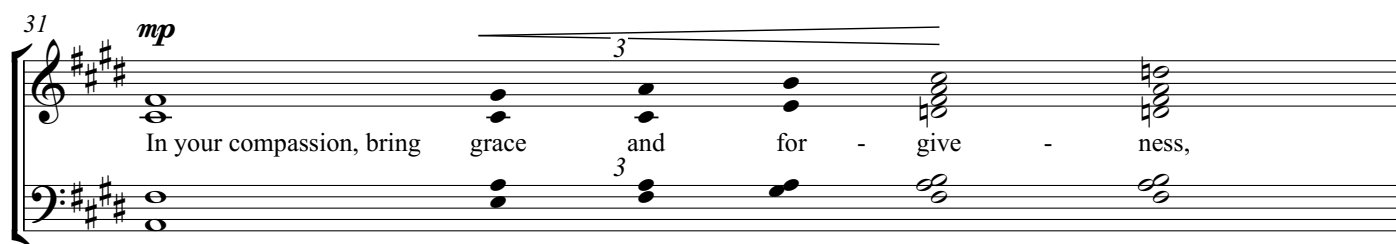
Your warmth gives life to the dead, your touch makes sin - ners right - eous.

29 *Cantor mp - imploring*



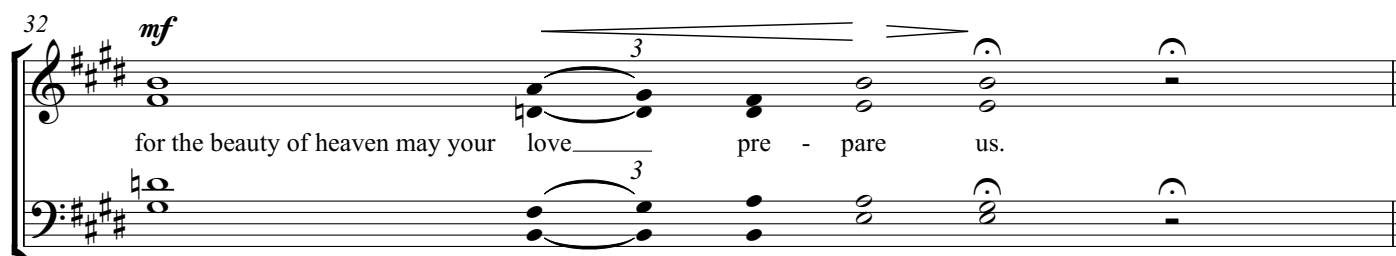
Lord Jesus, in your mer - cy, heal us; in your love and tenderness, re-make us.

31 *mp*



In your compassion, bring grace and for - give - ness,

32 *mf*



for the beauty of heaven may your love pre - pare us.

Repeat Antiphon beginning
piu piano e molto espressivo

Arranged for bells and piano by Thomas Lee

Handbells

Con rubato

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo/mood is marked *Con rubato*. The score consists of three measures. The vocal line (treble clef) features a melody of quarter and eighth notes. The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) includes arpeggiated chords and moving lines in both hands.

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in G major, 3/4 time. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second system continues the vocal melody with a half note C5, followed by a quarter note D5, and then a half note E5. The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic pattern. The third system shows the vocal line concluding with a half note F#5, followed by a quarter note G5, and then a half note A5. The piano accompaniment concludes with a final chord. The score is written in a clear, legible font, with the vocal line in a larger size than the piano accompaniment.

11

ease tempo *moving forward*

mp

14

mf *f* *rit.*

17

A Tempo *mf* *ten.*

20

24

Measures 24-27 of a musical score. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). Measure 24 is a whole rest in the treble and a whole note in the bass. Measure 25 has a whole rest in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 26 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 27 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The dynamic *mp* is marked above the treble staff in measure 26.

28

Measures 28-30 of a musical score. The key signature has three flats. Measure 28 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 29 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 30 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass.

31

Measures 31-33 of a musical score. The key signature has three flats. Measure 31 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 32 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 33 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass.

34

Measures 34-37 of a musical score. The key signature has three flats. Measure 34 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 35 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 36 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. Measure 37 has a half note in the treble and a half note in the bass. The dynamic *mf* is marked below the treble staff in measure 34.

37 *poco rit.* *moving forward*

mp

40 *mf* *rit.* *f* *rit.*

42 *A Tempo* *mp* *poco rit.*

A Tempo *mp*

44 *rit.* *pp* *rit.*

Handbells

The Lamb

Arranged for handbells and piano by Thomas Lee

Tim Blickhan

