

Music Blurbs for 6-3-18

For News and Notes:

Our hymn lineup for this week includes “O for a thousand tongues to sing,” “Glorious things of thee are spoken,” “Immortal, invisible,” and “I want to walk as a child of the light.” The choir's last piece for the season is a perennial favorite, “There is a balm in Gilead.”

For the Sunday Bulletin:

In 1738 Charles and John Wesley were studying under the Moravian scholar Peter Boehlert. In May Charles was in bed suffering from pleurisy. He was also having doubts about his faith. On May 21 a group came to attend to him and offered testimony. After they left he began to read his Bible and found himself deeply affected by the words and at peace with God. His physical strength also returned. Writing in his diary, he counts that day as the renewal of his faith. Three days later his brother John had a similar experience of spiritual renewal. A year later, Charles, the author of over 6000 hymns, wrote a hymn commemorating the anniversary of his spiritual renewal and evangelical conversion. That text was eighteen verses long, published in 1840 and entitled “For the anniversary day of one’s conversion.” The seventh verse recalled his teacher’s words, “Had I a thousand tongues I would praise Him with them all.” The beginning of verse seven is now the first verse of the hymn we know as “O for a thousand tongues to sing.” It has also been cut back to six to eight verses in various hymnals.

In 1780, his brother John published an English hymnal called *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists* (London, 1780). Except in the 1935 edition, it has been the opening hymn of every official Methodist hymnal in the United States. In the Episcopal Church, the text was an “on again, off again” relationship from 1871 on. While it appeared in the *Episcopal Hymnal 1940*, it was not with the present tune, AZMON, which is the standard melody for this text in American denominational hymnals. It wasn’t until the second supplement to *The Hymnal 1940* that the text and tune were combined for Episcopalians. *The Hymnal 1982* finally followed the standard American practice of combining this text and tune.

AZMON was written by German composer Carl Gläser in 1828. American music educator and publisher Lowell Mason first used the tune for a collection of metrical psalm in 1839. He kept using the tune, though by 1845 he switched it to its present triple meter. He would often give it different names, but the present name AZMON is what has stuck. Mason also liked calling tunes after places and this is no exception. Azmon is a place mentioned in Numbers 34:4-5 and Joshua 15:4.