

Music Blurbs for 6-24-18

### News & Notes

This week we'll sing "Eternal Father, strong to save," "Be still my soul," (sung to Sibelius' "Finlandia") and "I sing a song of Bethlehem." It's Mozart Sunday, as violinists Semyon Ziskind and Wayman McCoy join Newton for several Mozart Church Sonatas.

### Worship Bulletin

The text of "O sing a song of Bethlehem" was penned by Louis Benson, perhaps in 1889, and was included in print in his 1899 collection *The School Hymnal*. Born in 1855, he graduated from University of Pennsylvania Law School and practiced law before entering Princeton Theological Seminary in 1877. Upon graduation he became a Presbyterian pastor for a church in Germantown, Pennsylvania. He also took an interest in hymnody. His library contained 9000 volumes and he became one of America's finest hymnodists. He helped edit the hymnal for the Presbyterian Church as well as the *Presbyterian Book of Common Worship*. He edited several other hymnals including one for the Congregational Church and wrote extensively about hymns and hymnody. As well he wrote about 23 hymn texts himself. *The School Hymnal* from which this hymn comes is part of the Presbyterian practice in having graded hymn books to teach doctrine to different age groups. This text was intended for young people and summarizes significant moments in the life of Jesus: birth, growth to adulthood, ministry, and death and resurrection. Each stanza is a scene in the drama: Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee, and Calvary. As Rebecca Garrett (Perkins Theological/SMU) points out in the UMC Discipleship Ministries series, "Benson's portrayal of Jesus' life serves much as a Sunday school series would—to make personal those moments in Jesus' own life that are of greatest value to modern-day believers."

When the hymn first appeared in 1899, it was to a different tune. In 1906 Ralph Vaughn Williams used this text and combined it with the English folk tune KINGSFOLD for his groundbreaking *The English Hymnal of 1906*. This combination has become the norm in most hymnals and is how we are singing it today.

**At 10:30 worship only:** For today's instrumental music we are playing various Church Sonatas by Mozart. He wrote 17 of them between 1772 and 1780 when he was 16-24, living in Salzburg and working for the Prince-Archbishop. They are short one-movement works intended to be played between the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel and so are sometimes referred to as Epistle Sonatas. After Mozart left, the Prince-Archbishop discontinued their use in favor of an appropriate choral motet.