

For News and Notes:

This week, Cheryl Stafford will sing Howard Helvey's arrangement of "There Is a Balm." We'll sing the Methodist national anthem "O for a thousand tongues to sing," as well as "O beautiful for spacious skies" and our national hymn, "God of our fathers." When the text was first sung in Brandon, Vermont in 1876 for a Fourth of July centennial celebration, it was sung to the tune "God save the Tsar."

Blurb on God of our fathers

I am always happy to write about a Vermont connection. The text of today's closing hymn was written by Daniel Crane Roberts for the centennial Fourth of July celebration in in 1876 in Brandon, Vermont. Roberts at the time was the rector of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Brandon (which I have driven by many times). Interestingly, it was first sung to the tune RUSSIA, aka "God save the Tsar." The text, while American in origin, is a hymn of praise and a prayer for peace and does not actually refer to any nation. It gained immediate and widespread popularity and appeared in the Episcopal Church's *Hymnal 1892*. While the text was first used at a Fourth of July celebration, which of course commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the text was chosen for the 1892 centennial celebration of the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. George Warren, then organist of St. Thomas's in New York City, wrote the present tune for the occasion. The name "National Hymn" first appeared in the 1894 revision of the Episcopal hymnal. It is the only hymn of ecumenical acceptance that features trumpet fanfares. These were deleted from the 1940 version of *The Hymnal* but were restored by popular demand in our present hymnal edition.