

Music Blurb for 12-9-18

News & Notes

This Sunday at 10:30 we will sing “Prepare ye the way of the Lord” from Godspell, “I hear a sound” from an old hymnbook compiled just for our church, as well as “Let all mortal flesh.” The choir will sing Goudimel’s 16th century (so likely original) version of “Comfort, comfort ye my people.”

Sunday bulletins

The tune for “Comfort, comfort ye, my people” started out as a Genevan psalm tune for Psalm 42 in the 1551 edition of *Eighty Psalms of David*. It has been attributed to Claude Goudimel but evidence suggests it was more likely written by Louis Bourgeois of OLD 100TH fame. In Geneva and in other Calvinist enclaves, psalms were the only acceptable music for congregational singing. This went for the Anglican church as well. The Lutherans on the other hand relished original hymn texts and adapted this melody to the text “Freu dich sehr, O meine Seele” (Rejoice greatly, O my soul). In 1671, author Johann Olearius published a collection entitled *Geistlich Sing-Kunst* (Spiritual Art Song) which contained a four verse meditation on Isaiah 40:1-8 to be used for the Feast of St. John the Baptist. Its title was “Tröstet, tröstet meine Lieben,” which translates literally as “Comfort, comfort my beloved ones.” In the 1860s Catherine Winkworth who translated so many of the Lutheran hymns we sing today from German in to English included “Comfort, comfort ye my people” in her collection *The Chorale Book for England*. And so, this Calvinist psalm tune comes to us by way of the Lutherans rather than a more likely route as a psalm tune from one of the Anglican Church’s more Calvinist 16th century psalters. This text and tune combination is widely used in the hymnals of many North American denominations although in spite of Winkworth, hardly known in Britain. The Episcopal Church didn’t include it until a 1981 edition called *Hymns III* and from there it went to the present *Hymnal 1982*.