

Music Blurbs for 2-3-19

News and Notes:

This week the choir will sing a setting of the Gregorian tune “Ubi caritas” (“Where true love”). We will sing “Rejoice! the Lord is King,” and “Blessed be the God of Israel.” Be sure to come early (what a concept!) to hear our bells and our own Jeanne Lehning on violin play a favorite Handel aria.

Sunday Bulletins:

The text of today’s opening hymn was written by Michael Perry (1942-1996). Soon after he was ordained in the Church of England he set about rendering some of the traditional canticles of the church in to metrical form so that they could be sung as hymns rather than as Anglican chants. In that way they could be more accessible to congregations.

The text of this hymn is based on The Song of Zechariah from the book of Luke. When John the Baptist is born, his father Zechariah, who has been struck dumb for his disbelief, sings out when his speech is restored. In 1969, Perry sent this text and others to Michael Baughen, a Manchester vicar, who had just published a collection of similar work. Baughen then invited Perry (as well as others) to write for a collection that was published in 1973, *Psalm Praise* (London). The opening line read, “O praise the God of Israel.” Between then and the inclusion of the hymn in the *Hymnal 82* several changes were made to the text. The opening line was changed to “Blessed be the God of Israel,” reflecting the original meaning of “Benedictus” which means “blessed.” In his book *The Gospel of Luke* (London 1966), author Earl Ellis wrote, “The Benedictus speaks of the ethical transformation to be effected by the messianic redemption.”

The tune, THORNBURY, was composed by Basil Harwood in 1898 for the Annual Festival of the London Church Choir Association. It first appeared in print in a collection of the composer in 1906 and went on to be included in the 1916

supplement to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. While being a popular tune in England, it didn't appear in our hymnal until the 1982 edition. Thornbury is a town in Wiltshire, England where Harwood lived. Most of his tunes are names of towns from that area of the country.