

Music Blurbs for 7-21-19

News and Notes

This week we celebrate Saint James Day by singing “I sing a song of the saints of God,” as well as “By all your saints still striving,” and “Lord, whose love through humble service.” We welcome organist Matt Scheeser who will be filling in for Newton Lewis, who will be on vacation.

Sunday bulletins

The text of today’s closing hymn, “I sing a song of the saints of God,” was written by Englishwoman Lesbia Scott. In her own words, the texts of many hymns she wrote “were not for publication, but for use in our own nursery, as an expression of faith we were trying to give the children. ‘I sing a song of the saints of God’ was meant for use on Saints’ days, to impress the fact that sainthood is a living possibility today.”

Everyday Hymns for Children was published in 1929 with words, music, and illustrations all by Scott. The text for “I sing a song of the saints of God” became popular and gave her recognition as a writer both in the United States and England. In 1940 John Henry Hopkins, a member of the hymnal committee, wrote the tune GRAND ISLE just for this text for the *Episcopal Hymnal 1940*. Hopkins’ forebears included the first bishop of Vermont and also the author and composer of “We Three Kings.”

The tune was named for the island in Lake Champlain: Grand Isle, Vermont where Hopkins lived. The committee for the 1982 edition of the *Hymnal* eliminated this hymn. However, after an ensuing uproar, it was restored to the hymnal. Back in the 80s, committee member David Hurd who had lobbied for the hymn’s elimination, came to the cathedral in Burlington, Vermont to give a recital which ended with an improvisation on a submitted theme (that means the performer has no idea what they will be improvising on: it’s submitted on the spot). Then music director, Tom Strickland, couldn’t help but give David Hurd GRAND ISLE as the theme for his improvisation.