

Music Blurbs for 7-7-19

News and Notes:

This week we will hear a medley of Irish tunes that have become hymns. Yes! LONDONDERRY AIR aka “Danny Boy” has been used for as many as 11 different hymn texts, most notably “I cannot tell.” Karen Brown will play autoharp and Marta Vogel will play concertina using a reproduction of a 19th century Anglo concertina. They were mass produced in Germany in the mid-19th century, introduced in the US in 1840, and became a working class instrument widely used with popular and sacred music. We will also sing “Today we all are called to be disciples” which uses the tune KINGSFOLD, which is derived from the Irish tune STAR OF COUNTY DOWN.

Sunday bulletins:

The commission that compiled our *Hymnal* wanted to include texts by contemporary poets. In “Lord, you give the great commission,” by the Right Rev. Jeffery Rowthorn, they found the right combination of strong biblical and liturgical imagery with poetic excellence. The text gained an immediate acceptance and was approved by the General Convention of 1982. At the time he wrote the text, he was teaching at Yale Divinity School. Soon afterwards he went on to become the Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of Connecticut.

Each stanza relates the words of Jesus with specific calls to mission: “heal the sick” (Mt. 10:8); “baptize and teach” (Mt. 28:19); “This is my body, this is my blood” (Mt. 26:26-29); “Father, what they do forgive,” (Lk. 23:34); and “I am with you to the end” (Mt. 28:20). The *Hymnal Companion* explains that in the first verse (“heal the sick and preach the word”) we are directly called as Christ’s body, the Church, as witness to God’s purpose. In the verses that follow we are called to mission in a life of sharing, forgiveness, and servanthood. Each verse asks the Holy Spirit to “empower us for the work of ministry.”

Rowthorn wrote his text for use with the tune ABBOT’S LEIGH which is the tune we use in our *Hymnal*. However, the hymnal uses music written by Alec Wyton, who was Organist and Choirmaster at St. John the Divine in New York City. He was also on the hymnal commission. Wyton and Rowthorn knew each other from teaching at Union Theological Seminary (also in NYC). Stories differ: one says that Wyton’s tune applied to Rowthorn’s text was a friendly collaboration and that Wyton even named the tune ROWTHORN, honoring his colleague’s name. On the other hand, another story says Rowthorn had written the text with ABBOT’S LEIGH in mind, and he was rather upset about the new tune.