

Music Blurbs for 11-10-19: God of our fathers

News and Notes

This week the choir will sing John Rutter's setting of the text "Be Thou My Vision." Hymns Sunday will include "Almighty Father, strong to save," "God of our fathers," and "Ye holy angels bright." This week's postlude has a lot of local connections. It was composed by Charles Callahan who was music director at Church of the Epiphany on G Street in the District. It was dedicated to Fred Markey who was organist at Fourth Presbyterian over on River Road in Bethesda. Fred was also the salesman who sold us our present organ.

Bulletins

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, also known as "God save the Tsar."

The text, while American in origin, is a hymn of praise and a prayer for peace not actually referring to any nation. It gained immediate 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' 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.