

Music Blurbs for 12-8-19 - "Comfort, comfort ye, my people"

News and Notes

This week as part of the celebration of our Music Director's 20 years at St. James' we are pleased to welcome members of Capitol City Strings: violist Talya Schenk and cellist David Chentian, as well as singers Clement Joubert and Melissa Cregger. Special music will include music by Bach and Mozart. Actually the Mozart Church Sonata was first performed at the Cathedral in Salzburg on December 8, 1766 when he was ten years old. We will also have a slightly extended offertory at 10:30: the "Magnificat" by Dietrich Buxtehude. We hope you enjoy this musical offering. Our congregational songs will include "prepare ye the way of the Lord" from *Godspell*, "Comfort, comfort ye my people," and "There's a voice in the wilderness crying."

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 the tune 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 into 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 the more likely route for a psalm tune as 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 being British, it is 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*.