

Music Blurbs for 01-26-2020

News and Notes:

This week as we become fishers of people we sing “Today we all are called to be disciples,” “Jesus calls is o'er the tumult,” “Will you come and follow me,” and “Joyful, joyful.” The choir sings “Pescador de hombres” (Fisher of men), often known as “Lord, you have come to the lakeshore.”

8:00 a.m.: “Jesus Calls Us O’er the Tumult”

The text of the hymn “Jesus call us o’er the tumult” was written by Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895). She was known as one of Great Britain’s finest hymn writers. Most of her output was intended for teaching the gospel to children. She believed that the spiritual truths of the Bible could be best taught to children by use of suitable songs. In 1850 she married Rev. William Alexander who went on to become the Anglican Archbishop of All Ireland. After she married, she wrote poems and hymns to help with her husband’s ministry including texts that could be used with his sermons. In the fall of 1852 he asked her to write a poem for St. Andrew’s Day (Nov. 30), an important day in the Anglican Church, commemorating the calling of Andrew by Jesus.

William Herbert Jude (1851-1922) was born in Suffolk, England. In his lifetime he was known as an organist, recitalist and composer. He wrote the tune GALILIEE specifically for Mrs. Alexander’s text and named it after the lake where Jesus met Simon Peter and Andrew. The pairing first appeared in The Congregational Church Hymnal published in London in 1887. It must have been very popular because just a short five years later it first appeared in the Episcopal Hymnal 1892. While the editors of Hymnal 82 decided to use different tunes, we have chosen to use the original tune.

10:30 a.m.: “Will you come and follow me”

Dr. Hawn of the Perkins School of Theology calls the Iona Community one of the most important intentional communities of the 20th and 21st centuries. It was founded in the 1930s on the remote island of Iona in the west of Scotland by George MacLeod, an iconoclastic Glaswegian clergyman. He envisioned a non-denominational community to train ministers to engage with the poor and working class. As well, he gathered artisans to restore the Benedictine monastery to its ancient Celtic glory.

Today’s song “Will you come and follow me” is also known as “The Summons.” The text was written by John Bell (b.1949). He was born and raised in Kilmarnock, a rural town near Glasgow, Scotland. He originally intended to be a music teacher until he felt called to ministry. He was ordained in the Church of Scotland in 1978 and was appointed Youth Director for the Presbytery of Glasgow, a region that covered 500 churches. In 1980 he was accepted as a member of the Iona Community. While there was a strong emphasis on liturgical renewal there, Bell was drawn to its focus on ministry to the marginalized. Since then he has become the international face of the music of the community. In his own words, “I discovered that seldom did our hymns represent the plight of poor people to God. There was nothing that dealt with unemployment, nothing that dealt with living in a multicultural society and feeling disenfranchised. There was nothing about child abuse..., that reflected concern for the developing world, nothing that helped see ourselves as brothers and sisters to those who are suffering from poverty or persecution.” [from an interview in *Reformed Worship* (March 1993)]

“The Summons” is probably Bell’s most well-known song. It first appeared in the 1987 collection *Heaven Shall Not Wait*. The song asks a series of thirteen questions and calls us to a radical Christianity in which we “use the faith you’ve found to change the world around.” Like many of his texts, they are set to traditional Celtic tunes. This tune, KELVINGROVE, is named after a section of Glasgow.

Once again, as Dr. Hawn puts it, through his music, Bell wants people to stretch their faith and encourage them to live in a manner that reflects justice.