

Director of Music

NOTES from Our Director of Music Ken Selinger

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

Planning for our fall music program, with even a few thoughts about Christmas, has begun. As part of that process, I was recently looking over our music library and noticed how dramatically the music we now select has changed since I agreed to take on this position in the Fall of 1991. As I start my 20th season, I also think of how much we've also changed the pattern and structure of our Sunday morning worship. In the late 1990s, we added a new hymnal, *With One Voice*, and more recently, introduced an entirely new hymnal with new liturgical settings. And I certainly would never have imagined that our choir accompaniment would at times come from a CD. Every year I mention how fortunate our church is to have such a wonderful, talented choir to support our worship. A number of choir members have been part of this group for far longer than my tenure. We should also be grateful for those who have joined in recent years and the young people who sing with us. Our Chancel Choir rehearsals will resume on Sunday, September 19, with practice beginning at 9:10 am in the Choir Room (Room 202). It is at this time of year that I always extend an invitation to new people to join us. We're very fortunate to have strong leadership in all our vocal sections, so it's very easy to get started with us. You may have noticed that a number of our members sit in the congregation with their families and then come forward for the anthem. That certainly continues to be an option. While some of the music can be challenging, Betsy and I try to select anthems that are singable and do not take weeks of practice to master. In some cases, we have CD recordings that can help in learning a piece. If this is something that you've thought about, please come out on the 19th. Or share your e-mail address and we'll keep you informed of what we're planning.

HANDBELL RINGERS SOUGHT! Our handbell choir plays once a month October through May. The group is actively looking for new ringers who can play on a regular or semi-regular basis. The only prerequisite is the ability to read music. Please contact Betsy Selinger if you are interested: email address: betsyselinger@gmail.com. **SOUND SYSTEM VOLUNTEERS**…

We're still looking for volunteers to operate and monitor our new sound system. It is not difficult and definitely does not require someone with technical expertise. You just need to stay alert during the service (no daydreaming) and have a good ear. We need individuals for both the 8 and 10:30 services. Please contact me @ kselinger@ccivideo.com so we can setup an orientation session. Our more experienced operators will let you sit with them to get comfortable with the system. We hope to establish a schedule that would ask you to serve only once every three months.

FEBRUARY 2010

I was asked a while ago what the word or phrase was that is noted in our Sunday bulletin to the right of the hymn titles. I quickly answered, "Oh, that's the hymn tune." While the reply answered the question, I've since thought about whether it was complete enough of a response. So here goes a little lesson in what I call "Hymn Tune 101." All of our hymns are indexed by a tune name as well as by author, arranger, source, and musical meter. You can find some of that information at the bottom of the hymn page, with additional acknowledgements listed in the rear Indexes of the hymnbook. One hymn tune can have multiple texts. For example, the tune "Duke Street" might be familiar as *I Know That My Redeemer Lives!* That tune might have been inspired by the eight verses that Samuel Medley had already composed. (Yes, Medley was his last name and he wrote over 230 hymns.) This popular tune also eventually became the setting for two of Isaac Watts' texts, *Jesus Shall Reign* and *Give to Our God Immortal Praise!* It has always been regarded as a "sturdy and much loved tune" and was the setting for various texts sung during the Billy Graham Crusades in the 1950s. I found at least 30 other authors writing to this melody and appearing in other hymnbooks. The tune "Duke Street" has been attributed to John Hatton who is said to have known Samuel Medley and composed it in 1710. Little is known about Hatton other than that he lived on Duke Street in St. Helen's, Lancaster, England, and that his funeral was conducted at the Presbyterian chapel there. There are times when the writer of the verses also composes the music. They often name or index their hymn tune by words from the text, the name of a loved one, or perhaps the town or region in which it was written. Sometimes a song writer is inspired by a biblical text, some poetry, or prose. You will also notice in the acknowledgements that many of the tunes we sing have been composed by a different author than writer of the

text. Our new ELW worship book has many new texts written by a number of contemporary authors to traditional hymn tunes such as "Duke Street." While not all hymn tunes meet the definition, these are some of the attributes that are considered important:

- It must be suitable for singing
- Musical style generally considered to be suitable for devotional use in public Christian worship
- Singable by a group
- Usable with minimal instrumental accompaniment

For the early church, a successful "hymn tune" was like a folksong and sung by rote rather than from a book. It was sung as heard rather than as composed and written down. One of the first things that I noticed in our new ELW was how many of the familiar tunes now have new and/or revised texts set to them. There are a number of hymn tunes written in the 1700s that now have a text composed in the last 25 years. Through a familiar melody, the writer has found new ways of speaking to our culture. So that concludes our brief lesson and makes my reply more complete.