

Music Notes for January 14, 2024

Today is the second Sunday after Epiphany, and it is also the day before the Martin Luther King holiday, and both occasions are reflected in today's music.

The service music during the Epiphany season includes the Presentation Hymn, each week a different stanza of the hymn "Christ, be our light" (listen [here](#)), the Sanctus by Joel Martinson (listen [here](#)), and the Fraction Anthem (my composition, listen [here](#)).

The Psalms during Epiphany will be sung using the Hymntune Psalter. Each week the Psalm Antiphon is set to a tune of a different familiar hymn and the choir sings the verses from the St. Helena Psalter to a coordinating psalm tone. The Antiphon for the second Sunday after Epiphany is set to the tune "Tender Thought," which appears as hymn 702 in the Hymnal 1982, set to the text, "Lord, thou hast searched me out and dost know."

The prelude is a short composition by Walker Baylor (1891–1975) who was a composer and organist and whose career was spent in the cities and towns surrounding Chicago. He served as organist for several churches and was also very active as a theater organist, performing regularly for films at several theaters and at the Melrose Park and North Avenue roller skating rinks. The postlude is by Charles Callahan. Callahan (1951–2023) was a native of Cambridge, Massachusetts who was well-known as an award-winning composer, organist, choral conductor, pianist, and teacher. He was a graduate of The Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia, Pa., and The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC. This piece, dating from 1991, is based on two Spirituals, "Go Down, Moses," and "I Want to be Ready."

Today's anthem is a setting of the hymn, "It is well with my soul." The text was written by Horatio G. Spafford (b. North Troy, NY, 1828; d. Jerusalem, 1888) after an ocean liner trip from the US to England. Spafford, his wife, and daughters were supposed to travel together, but Spafford was delayed by business and sent his family on ahead. Their ship tragically collided with another vessel and sunk in just 12 minutes. Spafford's wife was saved but his daughters perished. Spafford had been living in Chicago and was a director and trustee for the Presbyterian Theological Seminary of the Northwest (now the McCormick Theological Seminary, sharing facilities with the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago). The text is appropriate to our times when we want to confess our faith in God's providence even though we don't understand the "whys" of life.

The opening hymn, "All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine" was written by F. Bland Tucker (1894 – 1984) who was the son of bishop and the brother of a Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. The text is set to the tune "Engelberg," by the Irish composer Charles Villiers Stanford. Both the sequence hymn and communion hymn are reflections on today's Gospel reading, Jesus' call of the disciples. The closing hymn, "We join today with all who long for freedom," is sung in honor of the MLK holiday tomorrow. The text is by Edith Sinclair Downing (1922–2016) who was a prolific writer of hymn texts, although she only began doing that when she was in her sixties. Downing also has a Chicago connection, having earned an M.A. degree in religious

education from the University of Chicago in 1946. Her text is set to the familiar tune, "Finlandia," based on one of the themes from a major work by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. The tune is quite appropriate for Downing's text, as the original tone poem that it came from an 1899 work that celebrated and supported the work of the Finnish people against Russian oppression.