

Counterpoint on Music for Sunday



John Wall, Music Director 9/17/18

Hymns–The People’s Theology Class 101 Hymnals have always been ecumenical taking whatever was judged good and appropriate. Now it is common to include outside materials in Sunday bulletin as former music director Charlotte Granter did. She reached out to new Roman Catholic sources teaching us many new songs. This week we sing: “One Bread, One Body” composed in 1978 by John Foley, a Jesuit priest and seminary professor. At the time, Catholics were looking for new songs for Mass in English. He quotes I Corinthians and Galatians saying “Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man no more; many the gifts, many the works” putting it into a compact form with just a guitar accompaniment. This one song began a new tradition in church music now shared by us all.

Sunday we sing from The Hymnal music coming from other sources, but no one hears “Praise to the Lord” and “Lord of all hopefulness” as anything but our own. The first we have been singing since 1863 and the second since 1933. Both come from folk-tunes. Because these are well-loved hymns, I thought today to share a few back-stories about the authors.

Lord of all hopefulness. Jan Struther is a pen name she used for writing children’s’ hymns including her choice of the Irish tune *Slane* for these words. If you *Google* “Slane” you get many sites for Slane Whiskey. However, the ballad *Slane* named after the hill in County Meath is where St. Patrick lit the Easter Vigil fire beginning his ministry in 5th century pagan Ireland. Struther (1901-1953) also wrote for *Punch* and the *Times* in 1937 there as “Mrs. Miniver” to lend support for the ordinary English woman during wartime. Her legacy includes a grandniece Ian Maxtone Graham, who was former co-executive producer of *The Simpsons* on TV.

Praise to the Lord I assumed was a thoroughly Lutheran hymn. It is not! Since 1863, it has been in Anglican hymnals. Joachim Neander (1650-1680) is considered the outstanding hymn writer of the German Reformed Church. A Calvinist, Neander providing tunes for the many hymns he wrote. As a preacher he held gatherings and services in a valley by the town of Bremen where he would ultimate become pastor. The valley was renamed Neander-thal (“valley” in German) in his honor in the early 19th century, and became more famous in 1856 when the remains of the Neanderthal Man were found there. Does that make him a godfather to all us the Neanderthals?

How interesting that both hymns are connected to the pastoral scene of hill and valley!

A stanza of *Praise to the Lord* not in modern hymnals reads:

Praise to the Lord, who, when tempests their warfare are waging,
Who, when the elements madly around you are raging,
Bidding them cease, turning their fury to peace,
Whirlwinds and waters assuaging.

We add this verse to the processional hymn on Sunday as a response to hurricane Florence last week.