

## Of Dying and of Dawning Days

BY DR. DON HORISBERGER 2020 HOPSON LECTURER

The pandemic has left many church musicians seeking ways to engage choir members and congregations during lockdown. While some places of worship have resumed in-person singing, at least to some degree, many continue to bring choirs together either virtually or not at all. And yet, we know that it's important for choirs and congregations who value singing as integral to their worship to continue in some way.

In a recent presentation for the Association of Church Musicians in Madison, WI, Ken Stancer reported on offering a four-week session on hymns for his congregation. Ken found that considering the hymn texts as poetry was quite meaningful for the participants.

During the same workshop, I presented Carlton R. Young's hymn-anthem "Awake, awake to love and work" as especially relevant to these times. (You may find the anthem in CMI's Choral Library if you do not know it.) The anthem is based on the hymn of the same name found in the hymnals of many denominations.

The text for "Awake, awake" is by English Anglican priest and poet Geoffrey A. Studdert Kennedy (1883-1929). Following ordination and posts in two parishes, Studdert Kennedy volunteered to serve as an army chaplain as World War I began. He was known for his compassion and care, going to soldiers in the trenches and on the front line to offer comfort and reassurance, and was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery. Let's consider "Awake, awake" along with another Studdert Kennedy poem.

The three verses of "Awake, awake" usually found in hymnals are actually the second half of Studdert Kennedy's six-verse poem "At a Harvest Festival" (from his collection *The Unutterable Beauty*, published 1927). All six verses are found in *The Episcopal Hymnal 1982*, but most hymnals include only the final three. Whenever possible, it is helpful to include the first three in some form, for they set up the "Awake, awake" text in beautiful and important language.

Another of Studdert Kennedy's better known poems is "Indifference" (from *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*, published 1918). The noted American theologian and Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (1895-1979) quoted this poem in an address about the importance of caring and compassion in life -- qualities that seem especially appropriate in these unsettled times.

These two poems offer particularly rich food for discussion, meditation, and prayer in virtual or in-person choir gatherings during Lent and into Easter. Consider the flow from Crucifixion to Resurrection in the texts:

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### ***Indifference***

*When Jesus came to Golgotha  
they hanged Him on a tree,  
They drove great nails through hands and feet,  
and made a Calvary;  
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns,  
red were His wounds and deep,  
For those were crude and cruel days,  
and human flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to Birmingham  
they simply passed Him by,  
They never hurt a hair of Him,  
they only let Him die;  
For men had grown more tender,  
Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them,  
for they know not what they do,"  
And still it rained the wintry rain  
that drenched Him through and through;  
The crowds went home and left the streets  
without a soul to see,  
And Jesus crouched against a wall  
and cried for Calvary.*

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### ***At a Harvest Festival***

*Not here for high and holy things  
We render thanks to Thee,  
But for the common things of earth,  
The purple pageantry  
Of dawning and of dying days,  
The splendour of the sea:*

*The royal robes of autumn moors,  
The golden gates of spring,  
The velvet of soft summer nights,  
The silver glistening  
Of all the million million stars,  
The silent song they sing,*

*Of Faith and Hope and Love undimmed,  
Undying still through death,  
The Resurrection of the world,  
What time there comes the breath  
Of dawn that rustles through the trees,  
And that clear voice that saith*

*"Awake, awake to love and work,  
The lark is in the sky,  
The fields are wet with diamond dew,  
The worlds awake to cry  
Their blessings on the Lord of Life,  
As He goes meekly by.*

*"Come, let their voice be one with theirs,  
Shout with their shout of praise,  
See how the giant sun soars up,  
Great Lord of years and days!*

*So let the Love of Jesus come,  
And set thy soul ablaze,*

*"To give and give, and give again,  
What God has given thee,  
To spend thy self nor count the cost,  
To serve right gloriously  
The God who gave all worlds that are,  
And all that are to be."*

A sense of why we sing and for whom we sing is especially important in sacred music. This is true not only in our offering of anthems, but also in the singing of our Psalms and hymns. If we focus even briefly on the words – the theology, liturgical relevance, or sheer beauty – of a phrase or verse, we empower the singers, aiding their worship sense and helping them to grow spiritually.

In my career of ministry through music, I especially have enjoyed “unpacking” hymns with the young minds of children. Their insights are astonishing, and their love of delving into various aspects of the hymns we sing is infectious. In our discussion of the hymn “Not here for high and holy things,” the children themselves noticed the alliteration, and were delighted to observe the many “high and holy” attributes associated with the “common things of earth.” At least one child later told her parents how “awesome” (a great word in this context) the earth is, citing words of the hymn. Another child asked “What is ‘glistening’?” When told it’s basically the same as glittering, he replied, “Glistening sounds more like stars than glittering. I like it better.” The image of a “million million stars” silently singing was also a favorite. Then the question: “Mr. H, what’s your favorite part?” To which I replied: “I like all of the images, but especially ‘the purple pageantry of dawning and of dying days.’” [Slight pause, then the singer smiles.] “Ooo, I really like that, too.” The language of mission and service in the second half of the poem can likewise inspire the hearts of adults. And a journey from “Indifference” to serving “the God who gave all worlds that are, and all that are to be” can change lives.

Once a singer has been engaged in this type of discussion, their sense of what we sing is greatly enriched, and they are equipped to offer music to the glory of God in a deeper, more spiritual way. What better time than now to begin such contemplations of the words we sing?

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# 2021 Is Off to A Great Start

*It was not the year CMI anticipated, and yet, looking back, it perhaps became one of CMI's best years. By transitioning to online delivery of courses, workshops, and music, CMI reached more people than ever. CMI's extensive online libraries—accessible anytime, anywhere—became a bedrock for delivery of services to congregations seeking music in new formats for online worship. CMI was up to the challenge; our members determined the direction for programming. Teamwork!*

## **Late Winter/Early Spring Offerings Inspire Musicians and Clergy**

Eric Birk of the American Guild of Organists in New York City gave organists new ideas to enrich congregants at home with “**Organ Music for Meditation**”. Attendees came away with repertoire and resources to offer their congregations insights into theological truths in hymnody.

In February, scholars and musicians from across the country gathered on Zoom to study the timeless **Church Music and the Christian Faith** by Erik Routley. Routley “spoke” to the events of the past year through his wisdom and understanding of the foundations of church music and its importance to the practice of the faith.

On March 15, the American Guild of Organists and CMI welcomed 331 online registrants for a “**Musicians and Clergy Working Collaboratively**” webinar featuring clergy/musician teams of the Lilly Music and Worship project at the Church Music Institute. The event was a record for attendance and for the topic, as well

as a “first” shared program for the AGO/CMI partnership. Watch the video at [churchmusicinstitute.org/musicians-and-clergy-working-collaboratively-webinar](https://churchmusicinstitute.org/musicians-and-clergy-working-collaboratively-webinar)

## **Upcoming Events**

**APRIL 26:** Webinar with the American Choral Directors Association. Watch website for more details!

**MAY 1:** Deadline for graduate course registration. See [churchmusicinstitute.org/events-and-workshops](https://churchmusicinstitute.org/events-and-workshops)

**JUNE 7-18:** Online Graduate Course “Congregational Song” for credit or audit. Guest lecturers James Abbington, Mary Louise Bringle, Zebulon Highben, Michael Joncas, Charlotte Kroeker, Don Saliers, Paul Westermeyer.

**AUGUST 6-7:** “Engaging and Lasting: Music to Build Transcendent Worship” with British composer and conductor Bob Chilcott and Yale University organ professor Dr. Craig Cramer.



## **CMI Mourns the Loss of Charlotte Diane Parry, Beloved Friend and Vice Chair of the Board.**

As a long time church musician and participant in CMI events, Diane became an invaluable member of the CMI board at a time when CMI was expanding its activities and reach. Diane's musical talent and faith commitments combined with her background in interior design to yield beautiful spaces for CMI. In particular, she situated the extensive choral and organ libraries, including a hybrid organ, to increase the ability of CMI to serve new audiences. This has been particularly important during the last year of the pandemic and will forever alter the way CMI serves its clients. Diane permanently made her mark on CMI and on the future of church music. See full obituary at [tributes.com/obituary/show/Charlotte-Diane-Martin-Parry-108511857](https://tributes.com/obituary/show/Charlotte-Diane-Martin-Parry-108511857)

# Church Music in Unprecedented Times

Dr. Zebulon Highben of Duke University Chapel interviews Rev. Dr. Paul Westermeyer, “Church Music in Unprecedented Times.,” based on Dr. Westermeyer’s book, *A High and Holy Calling*. View interview at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for “Church Music in Unprecedented Times.”



## ***Did You Know...***

Your CMI membership gives you access to our extensive, carefully curated ***Sacred Music Libraries***, with extensive Organ and Choral repertoire searchable by scripture, hymn tune, composer, and more! Visit [churchmusicinstitute.org/membership](https://www.churchmusicinstitute.org/membership) for more details.

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