

MUSIC AND LITURGY NEWSLETTER

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY

Lent to Easter, 2007

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Editors Musings

As I write this brief column, we have just had the joy of installing the new Dean of Trinity Cathedral. It was a wonderful service including a steel band as part of the musical worship. A variety of music was used for the service and the choir under the direction of Deborah Ford was comprised of members of several parishes and the cathedral choir. The organist for the service was Charles Banks, St. Paul's Westfield. The planning committee is to be congratulated on the fine work in preparation for this service. Things went smoothly and the service was an inspiration to all. We look forward to many wonderful years with the new dean. Please extend a welcome to The Very Rev. Rene R. John. We welcome him to the Episcopal Diocese of NJ and look forward to many wonderful opportunities to work with him.

St. Dunstan's Guild

I am happy to report that St. Dunstan's Guild is alive and well. We are gathering new members every month. If you have not

yet nominated a faithful choir member, please do so. The details are:

We have received many requests for membership in the St. Dunstan's Guild. The following information will help you in selecting parish musicians for this honor.

The St. Dunstan's Guild is open to all adult choristers who have served a parish choir in the diocese.

1. Letter of recommendation from the parish musician and the rector.
2. Ten years or more of continuous singing in a Diocesan parish choir (doesn't have to be the same choir).

Upon receiving the letter of recommendation from both the parish musician and the rector of the parish, a patch and a certificate of membership will be sent to the choir member. The patch may be worn on the sleeve of the surplice or robe.

Please send all letters of recommendation to:
Brent Miller, Co-Chair, Music Commission
St. John's Episcopal Church
158 West High Street
Somerville, NJ 08876
bfmiller@earthlink.net

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Music Resources

Choir and Organ

Orpheus Publications
3 Waterhouse Square
138-142 Holborn London
EC1N 2NY England
www.choirandorgan.com

Creator

PO Box 480
Healdsburg, CA 95448
www.creatormagazine.com

Rite

Liturgy Training Publications
1800 N. Hermitage Avenue
Chicago, IL 60622
www.ritemagazine.org

Church Music Organizations

Association of Anglican Musicians
P. O. Box 7530
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217
www.anglicanmusicians.org

National Association of Church Musicians
PO Box 61
Geyserville, CA 95441
www.nacmhq.org

The Royal School of Church Music In
America
2000 Hamilton Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130
www.rscm.com

Pathways to the Heart

As a child, my family finally purchased a record player (you all do remember what records are?) that would play a LP. My first major purchase was a recording of the complete Messiah with Sir Thomas Beecham. This was, of course, before our great interest in “authentic” performance practices. I did not know that the orchestration he used was one that had been written by Mozart. I was so moved by the work that I easily wore out those records. I was transfixed by the beauty of the Pastoral Symphony, the wonderful opening tenor pieces. The portion that moved me was the final chorus and the great and wonderful amen. Once it was through, I thought I had never heard music like this....and I wanted to somehow be a part of this process. Not as an orchestral conductor bur a choral conductor. Surely this recording had found a pathway to my heart.

As we prepare a choral ensemble for a concert performance or an anthem to highlight the gospel reading on a Sunday, what do we do in rehearsal to create a performance that will create a pathway to the heart for our congregation or audience? How do we as choral musicians create a rehearsal atmosphere so that hopefully the chorus will be so moved singing the selected works that it will carry over to our audiences and congregations .

How do we use our rehearsal time to accomplish this?

I conduct a 60 voice community choir of unauditioned singers. We do major choral works with orchestra, twice a year. This spring we will do a program of “Great Choral Works with Orchestra” Choosing the program was easy.....in fact there were too

many listed on my wish list and after much thought I was able to narrow it down to eight choral masterpieces. I also conduct a small church choir of 15 voices. All are unauditioned and come to choir for the love of singing.

My job then became not only teaching the music, educating the chorus, achieving proper vowel colors and blend and all the rest that goes into the preparation but to see what it was in the music that made it so wonderful and meaningful and what made it a choral masterpiece or an anthem that uses a wonderful text that reflects the readings for that particular Sunday. Was it the way it was orchestrated? Was the harmonic structure interesting? Did the tempi reflect the text? What was the background for which the piece was written? Does the text have meaning for us? This I find is the most important aspect of any choral work. Is the text reflected in the quality of the choral writing?

After much rehearsal and hard work...can we transmit to the congregation our love of the composition by the manner in which we perform it? Will the music and performance find a pathway to the heart for some of our listeners? Such as was the case with my exposure to Messiah. Hopefully the clear understanding of the work and the love of singing it would help to make the performance one that would move many members of the audience or our congregations.

Of course, we cannot expect that every anthem will in some way affect everyone. We can hope that somewhere in one of the selections; someone will be moved, touched by the music, the text and the performance. Even if it is only a few people, we have

accomplished a great deal. We will have touched someone's life in a way that nothing ever has before. We will have found a pathway to the heart.

Think for a minute about the following:

What made me choose choral conducting as my vocation or avocation?

What choral composition was the one that so moved me that it changed my life?

Have I been able to somehow also make my choristers feel the way I do for the music?

Have I made every rehearsal, one that touches my choristers in some way?

Do I constantly seek to improve my choral conducting skills so as to offer the best to my choir?

Whether it be a community chorus, a select ensemble, a small church choir, a professional church choir, all of what was said above can apply. We do want to find a pathway to the heart for all of those who listen each Sunday or at a concert to our musical offering. Do you strive to find a pathway to the heart?

Have I found a way to create a performance that will find, for someone, a pathway to the heart?

Brent Miller is Co-Chair Music Commission and Organist-Choirmaster at St. John's Episcopal Church, Somerville, NJ

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The Washing of Feet

The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Geitz

Foot washing is not what immediately comes to mind when one thinks of observing Lent and Holy Week in a particularly Anglican manner. Most of us think of the imposition of ashes, Litany of Penitence, parish discussions on forgiveness or self-denial, Lenten prayer groups, and the many moving and glorious services of Holy Week. But foot washing? Hardly moving or glorious and of course, not required by Prayer Book rubrics. Yet there is opportunity within the offering we are given on Maundy Thursday that can teach us the very basics of what the season of Lent is all about.

Something was not right that last night in the Upper Room. There was a coldness, a tension in the air. Something was wrong, very wrong. Part of it was the strange and even objectionable things Jesus had been saying lately - that he was going to Jerusalem to be arrested, turned over to the authorities, killed on a cross. That's hardly the kind of talk that makes for a joyous Passover meal.

But there was something else wrong that night. Luke's gospel tells us that on the way to the Upper Room, as the disciples walked ahead of Jesus thinking he could not hear them, they got into an argument among themselves about who was the greatest. It was not the first time they had had such a discussion, for we know that James and John started the argument when they asked Jesus if they could have the highest positions in the kingdom of God - to sit on his left and right side. And when the other ten disciples heard about this request, they were

extremely angry, probably because they hadn't thought of it first.

So here was Jesus on the last night of his earthly life. He had so much to say to them, so much to do for them on the last night he would ever be with them. But tension over who was the greatest was thwarting him, hindering him.

As a rule, upon arriving at their destination, the disciples would take turns washing each others' dusty feet - and this was something they did willingly, without even thinking about it. But tonight of all nights, all of them reclined stubbornly in their places and they would have none of this menial duty. "Why should I wash his feet? Maybe he should wash mine!" they were probably thinking.

And so, this customary little courtesy was not carried out, and they began their meal with tired, travel-stained feet and weary, argumentative heads.

In the midst of this tension, Jesus must have been exasperated, "What can I do for them in the short time I have left? What can I say or do that will possibly have an impact?"

As he pondered these thoughts, perhaps he looked around him, looked into their eyes and then he knew what he must do. So he took the towel and the basin and began the most menial of tasks, the most humble, selfless role he could think of, the role of the lowliest servant. He washed their feet.

One Lent as I re-read this familiar story, what hit me most was that among those whose feet Jesus washed was Judas Iscariot. As John's gospel tells us, "the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray him." Jesus knew that here was his betrayer. Here was the very man who would hand him

over to the authorities to face a slow and painful execution. Here was the man.

And what did Jesus do? He stooped in front of him and washed his feet and dried them with a towel.

This is consistent with Jesus' teaching throughout this ministry - love of enemies, turn the other cheek. Here, he powerfully acts that out in his own life and what an example he gives us. Here Jesus moves from the theoretical to the personal. This is no theoretical enemy - this is the one who is about to betray him, who has already betrayed him to the authorities. Can any of us even begin to approach this level of forgiveness?

What gets in the way of this for us? Many things, but one of them is pride. Pride can be good and is needed, but there's a reason that the primary sin spoken of in the Bible is that of pride.

St. Augustine wrote in *The City of God*, "This then is the original evil: humans regard themselves as their own light." That is why pride has been regarded as the root of all sin, the sin of angels and of the first human beings. It is the self-centeredness that shuts out other people and God, the turning upon oneself that makes love impossible.

By putting our own needs and ourselves at the center, we can destroy the goodness of the self. By refusing to wash the feet of those who would or have betrayed us, we hurt only ourselves, not them.

Who did the apostles hurt, by their talk of who was the greatest, by their own stubborn refusal to reach out to a brother in the humble act of washing their feet - only themselves.

But Jesus, as he had so many times throughout his life, shows them another way. He could not make it any clearer. He even tells them - "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also

ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example."

Yet in all the books I've read on Christian forgiveness, I've never read of Jesus' washing of Judas' feet as an example of forgiveness, yet what a powerful example it is. By engaging in this simple act in our parishes during Holy Week, perhaps we can shed new light on the very old, very familiar Lenten discipline of forgiveness.

Whose feet do you need to wash this Maundy Thursday? If we follow Jesus' example, the person whose feet we need to wash is the one who has hurt us the most. In so doing, we are the ones who will be cleansed. We are the ones who will be free. We are the ones who will be saved.

Thanks be to Jesus who at the Last Supper, shows us the way. May we have the courage to follow.

The Rev. Canon Geitz is the Canon for Ministry Development and Deployment for the Episcopal Diocese of NJ.

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Anthem Suggestions

A Lenten Prayer – Near –Aureole AE91 –
Two-Part Mixed – Organ

A Lenten Prayer – Salieri – GIA G-3427 –
Two –Part Mixed – Organ

Ah, Holy Jesus – Shackley – Hope C5274 –
SATB – Organ/Trumpet

As The Dark Awaits – Schalk – Augsburg
11-10951 – SATB – Organ

Ave Verum Corpus – Faure – GIA G-4563 –
SATB – Organ

Drop, Drop, Slow Tears – Owens –
Paraclete PPM09509 – Two Part – Organ
Grieve Not the Holy Spirit – Stainer –
Presser 312-10755 – SATB – Organ

Here Repose, O Broken Body – Pinkham –
Galaxy 7.0010.1 – SATB – A cappella

Jesu, Grant Me This I Pray – Kitson –
Oxford – SATB – Organ

Parce Domine – Obrecht – GIA G-1900 –
SAB – A cappella

Psalm 130 – Manz – Belwin SBCH9308 –
SATB – Organ

This Touch of Love – Schalk – Morningstar
MSM5083 – SATB – Organ

Easter Anthem – Billings – Shawnee A5386
– SATB – A cappella

Good Christian Men – Bullock – Oxford
E19 – SATB – Organ

On This Jubilant Day – Leaf – Augsburg 11-
1969 – SATB – Organ

Prepare the Song – Fedak – Morningstar
MSM50-40 – SATB – Organ

The Strife is O'er – Ferguson – Augsburg 0-
8006-764 – SATB – Organ

Up Through Endless Ranks of Angels –
Cherwien – Augsburg

Ye Sons and Daughters – Leisring – Coronet
392-42198 – SATB - Organ

Peace Be Unto You – Nystedt – Augsburg –
1455 – SATB - Organ

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