

Anthem Notes for November 20, 2016

Speak, O Lord Words & Music, Keith Getty (b.1974)
& Stuart Townend (b.1963), arr. John Ferguson (b.1941)

*Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory.*

*Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility;
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of pow'r that can never fail—
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.*

*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us—
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.*



Keith Getty



Stuart Townend

Speak, O Lord, is an SATB arrangement for choir and piano of a fairly recently composed hymn that is a passionate prayer for God's leading in our lives. Although the text says "Speak, O Lord," it would seem that it is really a prayer for us to listen and attune ourselves to God's voice because he does indeed speak to us in various ways—through scripture, through prayer, through the spoken word, through music, through creation, through the ministry of others. It is also a prayer for allowing ourselves to be taught obedience, reverence, humility. And to allow God's grace to fill our lives so that we might reflect his glory. It is a prayer for Christian dedication and living that is especially appropriate for this Consecration Sunday.

Keith Getty, writer of the text says this: "One of Christianity's distinctives is that we worship a God who has spoken - who is not

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silent. From God the Father, speaking the world into creation, to speaking through His Living word in Christ, to speaking by His Spirit through the written word. Throughout history the word of God has transformed the most proud leaders and the most hopeless victims, the greatest civilizations and the remotest of villages, in every age to every corner of the world—so incredible is its power.”

Irish born Keith Getty has been at the forefront of the modern hymn movement, successfully bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary. Collaborating with British born Stuart Townend (son of an English vicar), their hymns have a poetic and musical style that unites people of diverse traditions and generations, and which is influenced by folk and classical music as well as contemporary songwriting and standard hymnody. Both Getty and Townend are classically trained musicians. Many of their hymns have been recorded in diverse styles including choral anthems, (such as *Speak, O Lord*), symphonic settings, Celtic bands, and live worship events.

Composer John Ferguson has created a choral setting of the hymn tune and text which beautifully enhances the message. The accompaniment was written for piano rather than organ and the melodic lines are slightly syncopated, created rhythmic interest. The piece begins with the women singing in unison; the men join and briefly sing in two-part harmony before going to four-parts, which continues throughout except for some brief unison passages. These emphasize the message of the text. The overall effect is one of intense reverence.



John Ferguson

Dr. Ferguson is highly regarded as a teacher and performer, and his skill as improviser and leader of congregational song has received national acclaim. Each year he prepares and leads many festivals across the country both for local congregations and professional gatherings. He is retired from teaching at St. Olaf College where his responsibilities included directing the church music-organ program, teaching organ and conducting the St. Olaf Cantorei. In addition to several church music positions, Ferguson served on the music faculty at Kent State University for 15 years. He was music editor for the United Church of Christ Hymnal, 1974, and he is the author of numerous books and articles on church music. His choral and organ music is much respected and is published by multiple music publishers.

*Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.*