

Anthem Notes for January 8, 2017

Prayer of Blessing Keith Christopher (b. 1958)
*The days of old have come and gone,
Yet linger in our hearts;
We ponder all the times ahead and seek a brand new start.
May God's great love and grace abound
In everything we do;
Let perfect peace surround us now,
Our lives begin a new.*

*We trust that all our future days
Be filled with hope and peace;
And that our care for those we love will evermore increase.
May God's great love and grace abound
in everything we do;
Let perfect peace surround us now,
Our lives begin a new.
Amen*

This morning's anthem is somewhat unusual in that it is set to a secular tune and one that is both very well known and sung world-wide on New Year's Eve (often by inebriated people): *Auld Lang Syne*. Be that as it may, the Scottish text and tune are hundreds of years old and known by most people. Set to the familiar Scottish tune of *Auld Lang Syne*, this morning's anthem offers a prayerful text appropriate for the beginning of a new year.

About the Scottish *Auld Lang Syne*: In 1788, Scottish poet Robert Burns sent the poem *Auld Lang Syne* to the Scots Musical Museum, indicating that it was an ancient song but that he'd been the first to record it on paper. The phrase 'auld lang syne' roughly translates as 'for old times' sake', and the song is all about preserving old friendships and looking back over the events of the year. *Auld Lang Syne's* championing of passing time and goodwill means it is often chosen to mark funerals (like that of Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau), graduations and, in *It's A Wonderful Life*, at Christmas. It is sung and played all over the world, evoking a sense of belonging and fellowship, tinged with nostalgia.

Arranger Keith Christopher has taken the well-known Scottish tune, adapted and arranged it for four-part choir, penned a reflective prayer appropriate for a worship service and created an easily

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accessible anthem, both for the congregation (our listeners/worshippers) and the choir (our singers).

Following a brief introduction, the choir sings the opening text quietly in two parts, breaking into four parts at “May God’s great love. . .” The second stanza is essentially a musical duplicate of the first stanza except that during the interlude, the music modulates to a higher key. This stanza begins at a mezzo forte level (moderately loud) rather than the beginning of the first stanza which began mezzo piano (moderately softly). The piece closes with a final repeat of the final prayer: “Let peace surround us now, our lives begin a new.”

Arranger Keith Christopher is actively involved in music as a composer, arranger, orchestrator and producer. He grew up playing trumpet in band, accompanying in church, and singing in the church youth choir. His music has been performed worldwide by choirs, orchestras, and bands at places including the National Christmas tree lighting, Hollywood Bowl, All-State concerts, and many other symphony and concert halls and festival stages.



Mr. Christopher has received a yearly award for his publications from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers since 1992. In 2003 he received a Dove Award for the choral collection, “More Songs for Praise and Worship.” In addition, he has produced over a thousand recordings for music publishers.

A life-long church musician, he is the Music Director/Organist at St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Hendersonville, TN. As a veteran in the publishing arena, Mr. Christopher is the U.S. Choral Acquisition Editor for Oxford University Press.

*Great God, we sing that mighty hand
By which supported still we stand;
The opening year thy mercy shows;
That mercy crowns it till it close.*

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)