

Anthem Notes for February 12, 2017

Here I Am, Lord Daniel Schutte (b. 1947), arr. Schrader

*I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin, My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

Chorus

*Here am I, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.
I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?*

Chorus

*I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them, My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?*

Chorus

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Isaiah 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

I Samuel 3:4 Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am."



Composer Daniel Schutte based this hymn on these two Old Testament passages. One is the account of Isaiah's dramatic encounter with and surrender to God and the other is God's call in the night to the young Samuel, who, too, responded with "Here I am." Following is Schutte's own story of composing this music.

"When I was a young Jesuit, studying theology in Berkeley, California, a friend asked me for a favor, saying he needed a piece of music set to Isaiah chapter 6 for his

diaconate ordination ceremony in three days time. I was sick with an awful case of the flu and didn't know if I could compose anything suitable in that short time.

I told him I would try. I loved the Isaiah 6 Scripture passage where God calls Isaiah to be his servant and messenger to the people and Isaiah responds with both hesitation and doubt, but also with a humble willingness to surrender to God. If composing this music was going to work, it would have to be God's power and grace making it happen. Much like Isaiah I was not very sure that I could meet my friend's request, but I was willing to try.

I remember sitting at my desk with a blank music score in front of me, asking God to be my strength. I prayed for help and remembered also the call of Samuel, where God came calling in the night and asked Samuel to do something beyond what he thought he was capable of. I worked for two exhausting days on the piece, making last minute changes even as I took the music to my friend. I hoped it would be what he wanted for the ordination. And it was ok—even more than ok. From the beginning, people identified with the dialogue between God and us that is the core of the song. In the years since, many have spoken to me or written of their own experiences of God's "calling in the night" and being given the courage to respond.

For me, the story of "Here I Am, Lord" tells of the God who overshadows us, giving power to our stumbling words and the simple works of our hands, and making them into something that can be a grace for people. The power God gives is far beyond what we could have planned or created."

The hymn is unusual in that it changes the point of view of the singer between stanzas and the refrain. The stanzas speak from the perspective of God in the first person singular, while the refrain, though remaining in first person, is from the perspective of the singers of the hymn offering their lives to God.

Each stanza reflects a paradox. The powerful God, creator of "sea and sky," "snow and rain" and "wind and flame" is also the God who hears the "people cry," bears the "people's pain" and "tend[s] the poor and lame." Each stanza ends with the question, "Whom shall I send?" and immediately offers the response: "Here I am, Lord."



Jack Schrader, arranger, is much published and was a member of the editorial committee for our WORSHIP & REJOICE hymnal, in which he has 24 hymn credits. His music is heard in hundreds of churches across the country each Sunday.

Thanks to Bob Foltz, guest conductor, and Glenda Garcia, pianist.