O Christ the Same   Craig Courtney

O Christ the same, through all our story's pages,
Our loves and hopes, our failures and our fears;
Eternal Lord, the king of all the ages,
Unchanging still amid the passing years:
O living word, the source of all creation.
Who spread the skies and set the stars ablaze;
O Christ the same, who wrought our whole salvation,
We bring our thanks for all our yesterdays.

O Christ the same, the friend of sinners,
sharing our inmost thoughts, the secrets none can hide;
Still as of old upon your body bearing
the marks of love in triumph glorified:
O Son of Man, who stooped for us from heaven,
O Prince of life, in all your saving power;
O Christ the same, to whom our hearts are giving:
We bring our thanks for this the present hour.

O Christ, the same, secure within whose keeping
Our lives and loves, our days and years remain;
Our work and rest, our waking and our sleeping,
Our calm and storm, Our pleasure and our pain:
O Lord of love, for all our joys and sorrows,
For all our hopes when earth shall fade and flee;
O Christ the same, beyond our brief tomorrow,
We bring our thanks for all that is to be.
We bring our thanks for all that is to be.

This morning's anthem is a wonderful elaboration on all the ways that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8). As the choir sings, consider that we can rely on Christ with complete faith in all the circumstances of our lives—in work, rest, waking, sleeping, calm and storm. He is still the Lord of Love, the Lord of Healing, the Lord of Creation, the Lord of Life and Prince of Peace "who stooped for us from heaven." The measure of his love and reaching for us is awesome.

The music composed by Craig Courtney for this profound text underscores it beautifully, always enhancing and never overwhelming it. Some portions are sung in unison, some in two-parts and some in four parts. Courtney has warmed and enhanced both the music and text with the addition of a part for horn.
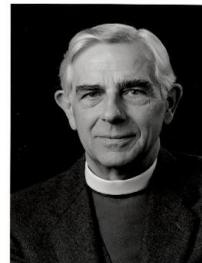
The text was penned by the Reverend Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926), retired Anglican bishop and the author of about 400 hymn

texts; there are 18 in our green hymnal. Dudley-Smith is honorary vice-president of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland and a Fellow of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada and a Fellow of the Royal School of Church Music. In 2003, he was awarded honors by Queen Elizabeth for 'services to hymnody,' and in 2009, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the University of Durham. According to author David Oestreich, Dudley-Smith's hymns never seem common or trite because of his mastery of various meters, his command of rhyme (both exact and approximate), and his gift for subtle yet effective imagery. Instead, they allow the worshipper to express praise in a form both contemporary and timeless.

Timothy Dudley-Smith (b.1926)

Composer Craig Courtney's biography has been shared several times in these notes. To review, he began playing the piano at age three and the cello at the age of eleven. He was on the faculty of the famed Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, serving as piano teacher and accompanist for the woodwind and brass department.

It was while serving in the music ministry of the Salzburg International Baptist Church, that Courtney began directing a church choir and composing sacred choral music. In 1985, his compositions came to the attention of John Ness Beck (founder of Beckenhorst Press), through the publication of his anthem, *Thy Will Be Done*. Following John Ness Beck's death, Courtney was appointed as staff composer and editor of Beckenhorst Press.

Craig Courtney

With more than three hundred choral octavos as well as multitudes of other compositions to his credit, Courtney is in demand throughout the country as a choral clinician and featured composer.

Thanks to David Glick who is accompanying the anthem on the Eb alto horn. Welcome to the Women's Choir.

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