

Notes from the Music Director (No. 18)

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rochester, Pennsylvania

Henry Doktorski, III

November 15, 2015—25th Sunday after Pentecost/Harvest Home Sunday



Harvest Home, also known as Ingathering, is a traditional English harvest festival, celebrated from antiquity usually during the harvest moon—the full moon nearest the Autumn equinox. The festival commemorates the last day of the harvest season in which

participants sing, shout, and decorate their homes and villages with boughs. This festival has survived to modern times, and in many Christian churches is known as Harvest Home Sunday.

Grace Lutheran in Rochester celebrates Harvest Home Sunday normally in November. Like the ancient Druids and Celts, we also sing and decorate (the church) with pine bows and other festive decorations (especially at the December “Hanging of the Greens” service when we decorate the Christmas tree), but as good Lutherans, we rarely shout.

In addition, members of Grace Lutheran contribute non-perishable food items, toiletries, paper products, etc. in a collection which is given to the Food Outreach Ministry. Grace Lutheran also hosts a weekly Community Table; a Thursday evening supper for anyone who wants to come in for a free meal.

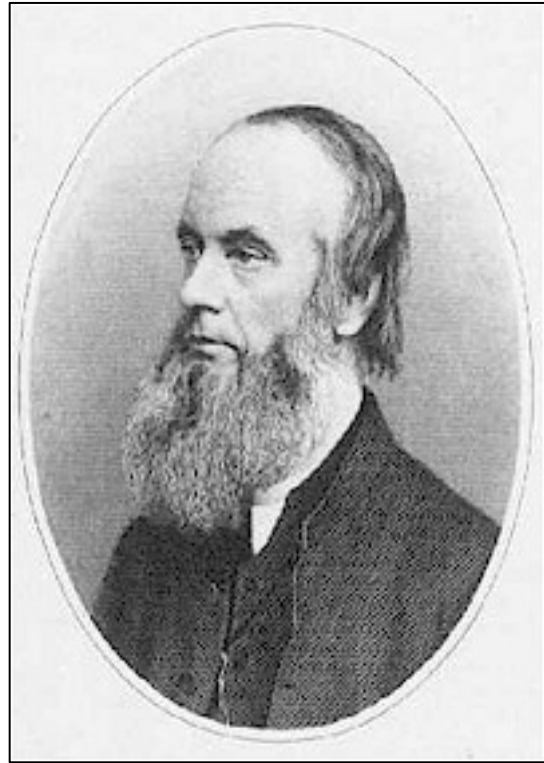
Our Gathering Hymn, LBW 407 “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come,” is an English Christian harvest festival hymn written in 1844 by Henry Alford. In our Lutheran Book of Worship it is sung to the tune St. George’s Windsor by George Job Elvey.

Henry Alford (1810-1871) was an English churchman, theologian, textual critic, scholar, poet, hymnodist, and writer. He was born in London into a family which had given five consecutive generations of clergymen to the Anglican church. Alford’s father was curate of Steeple Ashton in Wiltshire.

Henry was a precocious boy, and before he was ten had written several Latin odes, a history of the Jews and a series of sermon outlines. He went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1827 as a scholar. He—like his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, et al.—also became a clergyman. He served at

the vicarage of Wymeswold in Leicestershire, and later at Quebec Street Chapel, Marylebone, London. He wrote several volumes of poetry, a translation of the *Odyssey*, and a monumental edition of the *New Testament* in Greek. He was a friend to all and was much beloved for his amiable character. He chose the inscription on his tomb: *Diversorium Viatoris Hierosolymam Proficiscentis* (“the lodging place of a traveler on his way to Jerusalem”).

The composer of the tune (St. George’s Windsor)—which is commonly set to Henry Alford’s text “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come”—was Sir George Job Elvey (1816–1893), an English organist and composer. As a boy he sang as a chorister at Canterbury Cathedral and later studied at the Royal Academy of Music and New College. By his seventeenth birthday he was already known as a superb organist and eventually became organist at St. George’s Chapel, Windsor.



Henry Alford

Elvey was a prolific writer of church music. His works, which are nearly all for the Church, include two oratorios, a great number of anthems and services, and some pieces for the organ. His most famous work is probably the hymn tune Diademata, to which “Crown Him With Many Crowns” is most commonly set.

To hear *Come, You Thankful People, Come* (LBW 407)—with text by Henry Alford and music by George J. Elvey—sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVIsS243854>.

Resources

Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Zonderfan: 1989)

LBW: Lutheran Book of Worship (Augsburg Publishing House: 1978)

WOV: With One Voice (Augsburg Fortress: 1995)

W&P: Worship & Praise Songbook (Augsburg Fortress: 1999)

ELW: Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress: 2006)

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

Hymnary.org: <http://www.hymnary.org>

GIA Publications: <http://www.giamusic.com>

Hymntime.com: <http://hymntime.com>

Singers.com: <http://singers.com>

Back to the index of “24 Essays on 24 Hymns”:

http://henrydoktorski.com/Music_Director_Notes.html.