

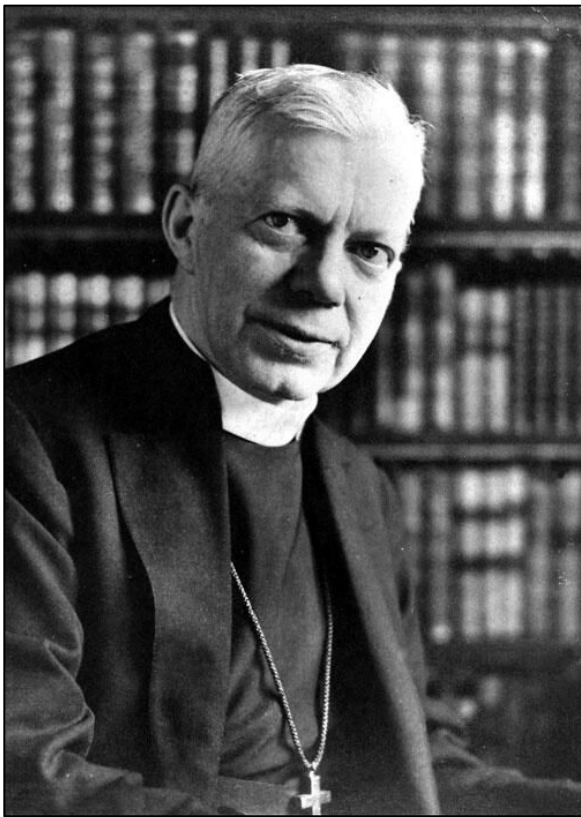
Notes from the Music Director (No. 19)

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rochester, Pennsylvania

Henry Doktorski, III

November 22, 2015—The Feast of Christ the King

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (commonly referred to as the Feast of Christ the King) is a relatively recent addition to the western liturgical calendar, having been instituted in Roman Catholic churches in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. In 1970 its observance was moved to the last Sunday of Ordinary Time and adopted by Anglicans, Lutherans, and many other Protestant churches.



George Kennedy Allen Bell

Our Offertory anthem today at Grace Lutheran is *Christ is the King, O Friends Rejoice!* with text by George Kennedy Allen Bell sung to the tune *Gelobt sie Gott* by Melchior Vulpius. The first line of Bell's text begins, "Christ is the king, good friends, rejoice! Brothers and sisters with one voice let the world know he is your choice. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!" Bell's hymn appears in our Lutheran Book of Worship (with a different tune) as number 386.

George Kennedy Allen Bell (1883-1958) was an Anglican theologian, Dean of Canterbury, Bishop of Chichester, member of the House of Lords and a pioneer of the Ecumenical Movement.

Bell's father, James Allen Bell was the vicar of Hayling Island, Hampshire, and later became a canon at Norwich Cathedral. As a young man, G. K. A. Bell studied theology at Christ Church, Oxford, followed by

studies at Wells Theological College. He was ordained deacon at Ripon Cathedral in 1907. From 1925 to 1929, Bell served as Dean of Canterbury; in 1929 he was appointed Bishop of Chichester.

During World War II Bishop Bell was an advocate for displaced persons and refugees who had fled the European continent to England, and also for interned Germans and British conscientious objectors. He criticized as “barbarian” the British government’s policy of bombing unarmed women and children which, he claimed, would destroy the just cause for the war. He was a supporter of the German Resistance and knew of the 1942 plan to assassinate Adolf Hitler (which was foiled). In the 1950s he was an outspoken critic of the atomic bomb race.

In 1995, thirty-seven years after Bell’s death, a complaint was made that he had abused a child in the 1940s and 1950s. Twenty years later, in September 2015, the Diocese of Chichester paid compensation and apologized to the alleged victim. However, eleven former choirboys at Chichester Cathedral who had known Bell during their time in the cathedral choir, wrote a letter to *The Times* describing him as an “upright, entirely moral and devout figure” who was being “smeared to suit a public relations need.”

The tune for *Christ is the King, O Friends Rejoice!* (Gelobt sie Gott) was composed by Melchior Vulpius (1570-1615), a Lutheran cantor, composer and teacher in Weimar, Germany. Although he was born into a poor family and never attended the University, he became known as a distinguished composer of church music. He wrote a St. Matthew Passion (1613), nearly two hundred motets in German and Latin, and over four hundred hymn tunes, many of which became popular in Lutheran churches. Our Lutheran Book of Worship includes six hymns with tunes composed by Vulpius. His tune Gelobt sie Gott is best-known to members of Grace Lutheran as the Easter hymn (LWV 144), “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!”

To hear *Christ is the King, O Friends Rejoice!*—with text by George Kennedy Allen Bell and music by Melchior Vulpius—sung by the Marlborough College Chapel Choir of Wiltshire, England, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lccZng7K_M.

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>

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