

Worship

HYMNS

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Dear Friends,

"Those who seek Me early shall find Me" (Proverbs 8:17).

How poignantly this truth is brought to our attention as we sing the beautiful hymn text, "When Morning Gilds the Skies", written by Edward Caswall in 1854. The son of a vicar in the Church of England, Caswall made two translations of this enduring hymn from the original German version into English in the mid-1800s. This hymn is reported to be among the favorites sung in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England.

In my attempt to encapsulate the spirit of the words that focus us on the freshness of each new day's dawning, I was drawn to incorporate some brief phrases from Edward Grieg's "Morning" from the *Peer Gynt Suite*. It was my privilege to field-test this new arrangement recently at the opening concert of this year's The Arts on Skidaway Concert Series at Skidaway Island United Methodist Church in Savannah, Georgia. I was pleased to find that my intent to tone-paint the first light of dawn to a full bursting forth of the sun in a brief section was achieved.

This arrangement is dedicated to Justin L. Addington, Director of Music and Worship at Skidaway Island United Methodist Church since 2010. I met Justin when he served as organist at the young age of 15 at Liberty United Methodist Church in Spartanburg, S. C. How thrilling it was for me to reconnect with Justin upon the recent invitation to perform a concert at his church—a celebration of the second anniversary of the dedication of their new four-manual pipe organ. I learned that Justin's accomplishments during the past 15 years are quite impressive. Many of the congregants of this vibrant United Methodist church related to me how blessed they were to have him leading their music ministry in such a dynamic way. Justin received a bachelor's degree in music education from Limestone College, and a master's degree in sacred music from Concordia University, Wisconsin, with an emphasis in choral conducting. He is a skilled organist and choral conductor. He is a member of the Fellowship of United Methodist Musicians, the Hymn Society of America, the American Guild of Organists, the American Guild of Handbell Ringers, and serves on the board of the American Traditions Competition. He is also active in community and professional theatre, having been an actor and musical director/pianist for many shows.

Justin was influential in the 2010 reviving of the Arts on Skidaway Concert Series. Past programs include distinguished individuals and music ensembles such as The Centurymen, the Russian choir "Lyra", organists Timothy Albrecht and John Benke, guitarist Brian Luckett, and soprano Michelle Jarrell. Some of the remaining events on this year's series include The Raleigh Ringers, tenor Vale Rideout, and British conductor Paul Leddington Wright.

Known for its strong sense of musical excellence, Skidaway United Methodist seems to have found a balance of maintaining their mission for great music and serving God with warmth and compassion in their community. The following is a quote from their printed information about the church.

In Savannah, Georgia, we appreciate and uphold a strong heritage of sacred music. John and Charles Wesley printed the first American hymnal here in 1736, and Lowell Mason composed many of his famous hymns while serving in Savannah. The music ministry of Skidaway Island United Methodist Church exists for the sole purpose of glorifying God through music and worship. In keeping with the foundations of Methodism, we seek to 'move on toward perfection' in our lives and in the musical offerings we bring to our creator. The ministry strives to provide a place for individuals to share their God-given talents while being encouraged through fellowship with other believers. We hope to draw ourselves and others closer to God by invoking His Spirit to move through our music and touch the hearts and lives of His people.

Under the leadership of their senior pastor, Rev. Jim Giddens, the church has experienced phenomenal growth over the past 25 years. While worshipping with them this past weekend, it was clear to me that their expressed purpose of bringing people to Christ while, at the same time, growing in their love for God through service to others is being fulfilled.

May Jesus Christ be praised!

Carolyn Hamlin

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