

# FROM THE ORGAN LOFT



A LENTEN NEWSLETTER

## **From the Organ Loft - Lent**

I am delighted to have returned to our beautiful sanctuary. As we journey through March, I want to spotlight the significant contributions of Black composers to sacred music that continues to enrich our worship experience here at Christ Church.

I'm especially excited to announce that on Sunday, March 23rd, we will host a special service celebrating the profound beauty and spiritual depth of African American spirituals. This service will feature exceptional musical offerings, including a performance by our distinguished guest musician, Greg Lorenz. Many of you will remember Greg's magnificent voice from our Lessons and Carols service and Christmas Eve celebration. A former Metropolitan Opera singer, Greg brings extraordinary talent and artistry to our worship, and we are blessed to welcome him back to Christ Church for this meaningful occasion.

## **Celebrating Black Composers in Sacred Music**

Here at Christ Church, we often draw from the LEVAS (Lift Every Voice and Sing) hymnal, which beautifully captures the spiritual style of music that uplifts our worship services. While this collection is a treasured resource, I would also like to highlight the contributions of two remarkable Black composers from New York whose music weaves throughout our 1982 Hymnal.

### **Calvin Hampton: Melodic Beauty and Rhythmic Energy**

Calvin Hampton (1938-1984) was known for his beautiful melodies and distinctive rhythmic energy. He composed six hymns that appear in our 1982 Hymnal. One of my favorites is "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (Hymn 469), which we will sing in the next couple of weeks. I will talk more about Hampton's contributions in the future, but for now, know that we will be featuring his music during the Eastertide season.

## **David Hurd: Tradition and Innovation**

David Hurd is another significant figure in American sacred music and liturgical composition. As a distinguished composer, organist, and teacher, his contributions to Episcopal church music have been profound. His inclusion of 12 compositions in the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal speaks to the high regard in which his work is held.

Hurd has a remarkable ability to blend traditional and contemporary elements. His compositions range from grand, jubilant pieces (like the Gloria we sang for Epiphany) to more contemplative works. He draws from various musical traditions including Anglican chant, African American spirituals, jazz harmonies, and classical forms, creating a distinctive voice that is both accessible and sophisticated.

His "New Plainsong" setting that we are using for Lent is particularly interesting. This composition deliberately evokes the ancient tradition of plainsong (also called plainchant or Gregorian chant), which dates back to medieval liturgical practices. The "New Plainsong" setting uses modal harmonies, unmetered melody lines that follow the natural rhythm of the text, and spare accompaniment that creates a contemplative musical environment perfect for the Lenten season.

As Professor of Church Music and Organist at General Theological Seminary, Hurd trained generations of Episcopal clergy in proper chanting technique and liturgical practice, insisting on precision and reverence in musical worship.

When we think of Black History Month, we immediately think of musical contributions to jazz and spirituals. I wanted to share with you a broader perspective of how Black composers have shaped and enriched our Episcopal liturgical tradition through their remarkable sacred compositions.

Note'bly,  
Suzanne

CHRIST CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK  
*a parish of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey*  
WORSHIPPING GOD, SERVING GOD'S PEOPLE

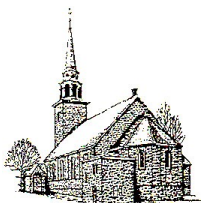


PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

*Historic Christ Church is a mutually supportive Christian community worshipping in the living Anglican tradition of beauty in liturgy and music. Christ Church bears witness to the love of Christ in prayer, service and fellowship.*

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE.

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The Reverend Joanna P. Hollis, *Rector*  
The Reverend Daphne Roberts, *Deacon*  
Suzanne McDonald, *Director of Music and Organist*  
Brittney Girault, *Parish Administrator*  
Elaine Winkler, *Bookkeeper*  
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