

## Archdeacon's Corner Continued

How then did the text make its way into the congregational hymn we now know as O Come, O Come, Emmanuel? In the early 19th Century (early 1800s) the Anglican church (the Church of England) was in decline. The liturgy and the general quality of the worship experience suffered as a result, as did attendance. A group of theologians from Oxford University set about to revitalize the Anglican church in an effort known as the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement helped bring about a return to a traditional liturgy and elevated the quality of music and hymns sung during the service.

A major force behind improving the hymns sung in the Anglican church at this time was John Mason Neale. Neale researched hymns that had been sung in the past, especially ancient Latin hymns from pre-Reformation times, with the intent to translate them into English and re-introduce them to the Anglican congregations. Neale translated the Latin text into English and the text that we know today appeared in the English hymnal, Hymns Ancient and Modern, in 1861. It has since found its way into many hymnals for many Christian denominations.

**The familiar tune to which we sing the text, can be traced to a 15th Century (1400s) French missal. The tune was a chant originally, sung by nuns during processions for Mass (and sometimes funerals). It has since become so closely associated with the text of O Come, O Come Emmanuel that this tune is now called Veni Immanuel.**

Just three last things that speak to the power of this enduring hymn. First, Isaiah the prophet, is the first who speaks of virgin birth and Emmanuel, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”* Second, in Hebrew the word *“Immanuel”* means *“God with us.”* Third, every Sunday during communion we repeat the *“Mystery of Faith”*:

*Christ has died.*

*Christ is risen.*

*Christ will come again!*

This Advent season, sing with joy O Come, O Come Emmanuel. Remembering the last verses:

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Jesus will come again, rejoice!

Praying that our Lord finds you and yours well,  
The Ven. Mark Richardson, Archdeacon