

Notes on the music for Sunday, January 19, 2025  
Martin Luther King Jr. weekend  
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
Richmond, Virginia

## Palmer Hall service

**“This little light of mine,”** which is thought to have roots as a traditional spiritual, took on new life in the 1960s as a well-known and beloved anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. As Freedom Singer Rutha Mae Harris [explained to NPR](#), singing the song’s joyful words and music gave her and her fellow activists comfort and courage in the face of danger, steadying their nerves: “Music was an anchor. It kept us from being afraid... It played a very important role in the movement.”

The tune of **“In Christ there is no East or West,”** *McKee*, also has ties to the spiritual tradition. The version we use from *The Hymnal 1982*, our hymnal at St. Stephen’s, was adapted and arranged by the celebrated Black American composer and songwriter, Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949). The hymn’s words, written by John Oxenham, emphasize the message of Christian unity and the “great fellowship of love... whate’er your race may be.”

## 9 and 11:15 a.m. services

A native of Arkansas, Florence Price (1887-1953) was a pianist and organist, as well as a trailblazer in music composition; her *Symphony in E minor*— premiered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra— was the first work by a Black woman to be performed by a major orchestra. **“Adoration,”** while written for use in church and specifically for the season of Epiphany, also hints at her background as a silent film organist in its harmonic language.

### **Hymn 792. Holy God, you raise up prophets** (*Martin’s Song*)

The text for this hymn is drawn from a collection of texts celebrating seven Black saints: Absalom Jones, Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther King, Jr., Cyprian of Carthage, Monica of Hippo, Simon of Cyrene, and Phillip the Evangelist. Carl Haywood’s music fits the poem expertly and has been included in recognition of the importance of Martin Luther King Day both in the church and in the world. The church commemorates the faithful departed on the anniversary of the day they entered eternal life while the secular world thinks in terms of birthdays; thus, the civil holiday is celebrated on or near the anniversary of his birth, January 15.

Dr. David Hurd (b. 1950) was Professor of Sacred Music and Director of Chapel Music at the General Theological Seminary, New York City, for 39 years, and is presently the Director of Music at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Times Square, New York City. His anthem, *Ubi caritas*, was composed in thanksgiving for the ministry of The Rev. Lowell E. Grisham,

and was commissioned by the Holy Land Group 2010, St. Paul's Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas, who found these words on the West Bank wall in Bethlehem near the Jerusalem gate: "For He Himself is peace who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier that divides all hostility. He is our peace." The piece includes the text and Gregorian chant melody of the *Agnus Dei*, echoing settings of the *Requiem* mass, as well as the text— set to an original melody— of the ancient antiphon *Ubi caritas et amor*, "Where charity and love are, God is there." The English text poignantly unites the two Latin texts to form a powerful prayer for peace, expressing faith in love's power to transcend our earthly barriers and unite the divide between earth and heaven.

Often deemed the "Dean of Afro-American composers," Oberlin Conservatory graduate William Grant Still (1895–1978) was an important musical and cultural luminary of the Harlem Renaissance. "**All that I am**" features a text written by Still's wife and musical collaborator, the pianist and writer Verna Arvey. Still's talent for lyricism shines through in the piece's hymn-like melody and gently colorful harmony.

Conductor, composer, and organist Dr. Carl Haywood (b. 1949) is a native of Portsmouth, Virginia and a graduate of Norfolk State University, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Southern California. He was a longtime faculty member at Norfolk State University and served as organist and choirmaster at Grace Episcopal Church of Norfolk, Virginia for twenty-five years; Haywood was also an editor and notable contributor to the Episcopal hymnal supplements *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, *Wonder, Love, and Praise*, and *Voices Found*. His "**Improvisation on We Shall Overcome**" exuberantly sets the gospel song of the name, which rose to prominence as one of the Civil Rights Movement's most iconic protest anthems. Haywood's setting is dedicated to Mark and Virginia Whitmire, the longtime choirmasters of St. James Episcopal Church in Richmond.

Sometimes referred to as the "Black National Anthem," **Hymn #599. Lift every voice and sing** was written at the turn of the 20th century by brothers James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson. The former was a prominent academic, civil rights activist, and literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance, serving as both the first Black professor at New York University and executive secretary of the NAACP. James Weldon Johnson's text reflects on the wide sweep of US history, solemnly acknowledging the "weary years" and "silent tears" of the "dark past," but also expressing a message of extraordinary resilience and profound hope for the future.

## **Celtic Evensong**

Harry Thacker Burleigh (1866-1949) played a significant role in the development of American art song, having composed over 200 works in the genre. He named his mother as his first music teacher and learned the traditional spirituals, for which he would later become famous, from her and from his maternal grandfather, who had been enslaved but had successfully purchased his own freedom. Burleigh was the first Black composer acclaimed

for his concert songs as well as for his adaptations of spirituals. **“By an’ by”** is Burleigh’s setting of a hymn by Black Methodist minister Charles Albert Tindley, a founding composer of the American gospel music tradition.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) was a British composer and conductor whose works gained popularity in his lifetime due to the support of composers such as Edward Elgar and Charles Villiers Stanford. This led Coleridge-Taylor to make multiple tours of the United States, during the first of which he was received at the White House by President Theodor Roosevelt. Coleridge-Taylor’s father Daniel Taylor was descended from African-American slaves who had been freed from slavery by British soldiers at the end of the Revolutionary War, and Samuel considered emigrating to the U.S. at one point due to his interest in his ancestry. “Arietta” is the first movement of his 1898 work for organ *Arietta, Elegy, and Melody*.

As mentioned in the note above, Arkansas native Florence Price (1887–1953) was a trailblazer in music composition. In recent years, Price’s music has enjoyed a well-deserved and overdue resurgence in interest. **“Evening shadows”** is the fourth movement of *Thumbnail Sketches of a Day in the Life of a Washerwoman*, a short character suite for piano. Musicologist John Michael Cooper writes that the work—composed in the late 1930s or early 1940s—“shows us a richly human and indeed humanitarian side of Florence Price.” Cooper continues, “Price valorizes the lowly washerwoman...working to humanize a stereotypical figure, using her music to give personality, depth of character, and dignity to a class of individuals of low socioeconomic standing who were despised by the very world that relied on them and their work.”

## Compline

As mentioned in the note above, David Hurd is widely recognized as a leading sacred music composer, concert organist, and church musician. **“Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ”** is a setting of a text by Frank von Christierson, found in hymn #698 in our Hymnal 1982. Hurd masterfully alternates sections of chant-like melody and gentle choral accompaniment with expressive statements of the text for full choir. The melodic foundation for the chant-like sections is an adaptation by Hurd of a traditional plainsong Lord’s Prayer, which was previously adapted by Charles Winfred Douglas as S-119 in our Hymnal 1982. “Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ” was commissioned by the 2006 Association of Anglican Musicians Conference in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the organization. For this service of Compline, we will also sing David Hurd’s own setting of the Lord’s Prayer, which is excerpted from his *Preces and Responses* of 2021, which were commissioned by Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland, Oregon.

Damon Dandridge (b. 1977) is currently Assistant Professor of Music at the American University of Sharjah (UAE), where he conducts the AUS choir. He previously also served as Director of Choral Activities at Bethune-Cookman University and Cheyney University of

Pennsylvania. Dandridge has carried forward the art of spiritual arrangement, furthering the work of his esteemed mentors, including Dr. Brazeal W. Dennard, Dr. Roland M. Carter, Dr. André J. Thomas, and the late Mr. Moses G. Hogan. **“I know I’ve been changed”** is an arrangement of one of the many spirituals sung by slaves that expressed themes of salvation and conversion. Dandridge uses textures of call and response between soloist and choir, as well as between sections of the choir, forming a powerful hymn of thanksgiving for God’s salvation from earthly suffering.

**Notes by Diana Chou and Brent te Velde**