

Music Notes for December 2nd

Prelude: Johann Pachelbel: Chorale Prelude: *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*

Introit: *Veni redemptor gentium - Nun komm der Heiden Heiland - Savior of the Gentiles, come!*
(The evolution of a hymn from plainchant)

Anthem: Michael Praetorius: *Come, thou Redeemer of the earth*

Offertory: J.S. Bach: *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*, fughetta BWV 699

Communion: Andreas Nikolaus Vetter: Fughette super *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*
Samuel Scheidt: Praeludium: *Veni redemptor gentium*

Choral Response: J.S. Bach: *Praise to God here, ev'ry one* BWV 62/6

Postlude: J.S. Bach arr. Ferruccio Busoni: *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland* BWV 659

Lutheran chorales (many of which have their origins in Roman Catholic plainchant) form a large part of the modern Protestant hymn repertoire. In our *Pilgrim Hymnal* over seventy hymns have melodies that were known and used by Bach and his contemporaries. Many remain as familiar to the congregations today as they were in the sixteenth century. Setting of the melodies were used in all forms of church music both vocal and instrumental.

The plainchant hymn *Veni, redemptor gentium* was written in the fourth century BC by St. Ambrose of Milan, to be used during Advent. It was one of the many Latin texts translated by Martin Luther in 1524 for inclusion in his *Etlich cristlich Lieder Lobgesang und Psalm*, the first Lutheran hymnal. The melody for the hymn is adapted from the plainchant to fit the German translation *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*. The most famous settings of the text are probably the two cantatas by J.S. Bach, written for use on the first Sunday in Advent, though over 50 composers have set the melody in one form or another.

As an introit, I have assembled three versions of the first verse in Latin chant, German chorale, and English to show the evolution of the hymn over a period of nearly two thousand years. The anthem is an elegant setting of the same text — but to a different German melody — by Praetorius (who is most famous to modern audiences for setting the Christmas carol *Lo how a rose e'er blooming*), and the choral response will be an English translation of the final chorale from Bach's Cantata 62.

The organ prelude this morning is an ornate setting by Pachelbel in the form of a chorale partita, which is a set of variations. The communion music will be two fairly straightforward settings; one by Scheidt with the melody played on the organ pedals, the other by Vetter in the form of a short fugue. The offertory and postlude are two very different setting by Bach, the first a fugue played on organ, and the second a highly decorated yet solemn setting arranged for the piano by the virtuoso Romantic pianist Ferruccio Busoni.

Thomas Dawkins, interim organist/choir director