Moravian Music Sunday 2020

Theme: “Sing to the Lord, All the Earth! Tell God’s Salvation from Day to Day!”

Music Suggestions

The hymns in the proposed order of worship have texts that relate to our theme, and also all have tunes that date back to the work of Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen (1670-1739), who was born 350 years ago. He was born at Gandersheim (southern lower Saxony, Germany) on December 2, 1670. He studied at the University of Jena, and later at Halle, the center for Pietism within Prussia. After teaching as a private tutor, he returned to serve as a pastor in Halle, later teaching at the school. After the death of A. H. Francke, Freylinghausen succeeded him as pastor at St. Ulrich’s and director the Francke Institutions, leading them to their highest development. He suffered several strokes, leading to his death in February of 1739. Almost all of his hymns were published in his own hymnbook, the standard collection of the Halle school. These hymnals united the best of Pietism with the older “classical” hymns. His 1703 Chistreiches Gesang-Buch had 683 hymn texts and 173 melodies. Later editions and the Neues Geistreiches Gesangbuch of 1714, added more hymn text and melodies. Freylinghausen was not a Moravian, but his influence upon Moravian hymnody was great, especially through the work of Christian Gregor (1723-1801). Gregor was a devotee of Freylinghausen’s work, and included many of his hymns and musical settings in the 1778 German Moravian hymnal and 1784 Choralbuch, both of which Gregor edited.

We are also suggesting a variety of anthems for you to consider for Moravian Music Sunday. For any of these that you choose to use, feel free to print the information about them in your bulletin or newsletter.

You’re very welcome to print any of the information below in your bulletin or newsletter where you describe what you’re doing for Moravian Music Sunday! Knowing something about the piece’s composition can be enlightening to your congregation and inspire them to pay closer attention to both text and music. Your choir members in particular will appreciate learning more about the composers and the music they’re singing.

David Moritz Michael, Bring to the Lord Your Praise with Singing – SSAB choir with organ or piano (Moravian Star Anthem Series)

This jubilant anthem speaks to both the Old Testament and Epistle lessons recommended for Moravian Music Sunday, urging us to sing our praises to God in thanksgiving for the life and work of Jesus. The soprano part is high, but with the purchase of copies you also receive a copy of the organ part in a lower key – thus lowering the range for all voices.

David Moritz Michael (1751-1827) was born in Germany, but did not become a Moravian until he was thirty years old. He taught in the Moravian school at Niesky and came to America in 1795. His official church position was as worker with the young men of the congregations in Nazareth and Bethlehem, but his contributions to the musical life of the settlements was great. He revitalized the Bethlehem Collegium musicum and conducted the American premiere performance of Haydn’s "Creation". He wrote anthems and arias for church services, but especially his Parthien and the two Water Music suites written for excursions on the Lehigh River. He returned to Germany in 1815 and died in Neuwied, Germany, on February 26, 1827.
Massah M. Warner, *Choral Responses* – SATB choir with piano or organ (*Moravian Star Anthem Series*)

There are two sets of these, each with 7 short pieces that could be sung as introits, offertory responses, or benediction responses. All are accessible for the average choir, and may be sung with less than the SATB complement, as all the harmonies are contained in the keyboard part.

Massah Miksch Warner (1836-1900) was a Philadelphia Moravian organist, composer, and hymnal editor. He is best known as the composer of a choral setting of the Lord’s Prayer, written for *The Liturgy and Offices of Worship and Hymns* of 1891. Also familiar from his pen is a hymn tune which bears his name and which is sung with the text “Softly the Night Is Sleeping”. These responses were edited from manuscript copies in the Bethlehem Congregation music collection. They are part of a set of 21 such responses.

Ezechiel John Williams, *Come, Let Us Sing* – SATB choir with piano or organ (*Moravian Star Anthem Series*)

Ezechiel John (“Sachs”) Williams is a South African Moravian composer, born in 1943. He has taught at many Moravian schools and served as organist and choir master. He is the founder of the Youth Brass Band at Grassy Park, Cape Town, and the Moravian Choir Union of South Africa. This anthem was composed for the festival of the 250th anniversary of Moravian missions (1982).

Johann Christian Geisler, *The Fruit of the Spirit* – SAB choir with flute and organ or piano (*Moravian Star Anthem Series*)

This is a three-part arrangement of the well-loved Moravian anthem based on Galatians 5:22. In addition to being set for three voice parts, it is in a lower key (F major instead of the original A major), making especially the soprano part more “singable” for the average choir while maintaining the beauty and gracefulness of the original. The flute part is the original but transposed down. This requires a flutist of some accomplishment and skill; don’t hand the part to a less-experienced player at the last minute!

Johann Christian Geisler (1729-1815) was born in Toppliwoda, Silesia and learned to play the organ and harp at an early age. At sixteen he was instrumental in starting a trombone choir for the Gnadenfrei congregation in Silesia. He knew Gregor and other leading Moravian musicians of the period, and may have been a teacher of Johannes Herbst. His first wife was a harpist, and it is perhaps no accident that thirteen of his anthems utilize that instrument. Geisler served as minister to several congregations in Europe and became a member of the Unity Elders Conference, the Moravian Church’s chief governing board. He began to compose in 1760, and by 1805 had written approximately 300 musical works. Although he never visited America, most of his pieces found their way into Moravian collections here. He died in Berthelsdorf, near Herrnhut, on April 14, 1815.

Johann Christian Bechler, *I’ll Praise the Lord With Singing* – S solo, SATB choir with organ or piano (*Moravian Star Anthem Series*)

This is a lovely anthem if you have a good soprano soloist! The choral parts are simply the phrases of a hymn (*Lamb of God, you shall remain forever*) sung beneath the soaring soprano.

Johann Christian Bechler (1784-1857) was born on the Baltic island of Oesel (modern Saaremaa), where his father was a Moravian minister. He was educated at Moravian schools in Niesky and Barby, Germany. Music was his favorite subject, and he says that he "devoted every moment of time left by other duties to the acquisition of various branches of his charming art." At the completion of his studies he taught organ at Barby, and in 1806 accepted a call to America, where he became one of the first professors of Moravian Theological Seminary. His interest in music continued, and he composed many choral and liturgical pieces. He served as minister to the Moravian congregation of Philadelphia, Staten Island, Lititz, PA, and Salem, NC. In 1836, shortly after his consecration as bishop, he went to serve the congregation in Sarepta, Russia. In 1849 he retired to Herrnhut, the center of the Moravian Church in
Germany, and died there on April 18, 1857. Bechler is best known as the composer of the tune for "Sing Hallelujah, Praise the Lord."

**Mark Biggam, Jesus Makes My Heart Rejoice – SATB choir with 2 oboes (flutes, violins) with piano or organ (Moravian Star Anthem Series)**

This joyful setting of the familiar Moravian hymn is very accessible for the average choir. The two solo instrument parts form a lovely trio with the keyboard in the introduction and interludes.

Living Moravian composer Mark Biggam studied composition and oboe at the North Carolina School of the Arts, the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and Ohio University. His compositions have been performed by OBOHIO, the Ohio BoyChoir and Plymouth Trio, members of the Cleveland, Atlanta, and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, and Pittsburgh Ballet and Opera Company. He is active as a performer on oboe, English horn, and oboe d’amore.

**Ernst Immanuel Erbe, Make a Joyful Noise – SATB choir with organ or piano (Moravian Star Anthem Series)**

A setting of Psalm 100, this requires a four-part choir where all parts move independently. It is well worth the effort to learn, and will become a valued addition to your choir’s repertoire!

Ernst Immanuel Erbe (1854-1927) was born in Berne, Switzerland, where his father was a Moravian minister. He was educated in Herrnhut, was a regular church organist when he was fourteen and was such an accomplished musician that at age seventeen his entry in a musical contest was returned because the judges thought it must have been written by a teacher. He came to America when he was thirty-five and spent most of the rest of his life in St. Louis, serving as organist in several congregations of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and supplementing his income by working as a bookkeeper. His works include organ and piano pieces, string quartets, solos for men, a cantata, and numerous anthems. Erbe's manuscripts were donated to the Moravian Music Foundation by his daughter, Louise, in 1978.

**Johann Christian Bechler, O the Blessedness Is Great – SAB choir with organ or piano (Moravian Star Anthem Series)**

This is a three-part arrangement of the long-beloved Bechler standard, in D major instead of the F major of the original. Reducing the number of voices, and lowering the key, makes this lovely anthem much more accessible to the smaller choir. It is also very effective sung in unison or with a soloist!

**Johannes Herbst, Praise the Lord, All His Hosts – SATB/SSAB double choir with organ or piano (Moravian Star Anthem Series)**

Written for the dedication of the Lititz Moravian Church, 13 August 1787, this is one of Herbst’s most glorious works!

Johannes Herbst (1735-1812) was born at Kempten, Swabia, and joined the Moravian Church in 1748. He first served the church as bookkeeper and teacher, and especially as an organist, before coming to America in 1785 to be a pastor in Lancaster and Lititz, PA. In his spare time he was a prolific composer, producing over 100 anthems and 200 sacred songs. He was also an avid copier of other composers' music, and his personal collection of over 1000 anthems and many larger works, now housed at the Moravian Music Foundation, is a source of incalculable value for the study of Moravian music. He was consecrated a bishop in Lititz on May 12, 1811, two days before leaving to take up new work in Salem, NC. He brought his precious music collection with him, but served only a few months before his death there on January 15, 1812. He is buried in God’s Acre in Salem.