

Notes from the Music Director (No. 13)

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rochester, Pennsylvania

Henry Doktorski, III

October 11, 2015—20th Sunday after Pentecost

Today our Gathering Hymn is “Morning Has Broken” by Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965), an English author noted for her children’s stories and plays. Her text for “Morning Has Broken” expresses a childlike appreciation for “God’s recreation of the new day” and likens each dawn—full of beauty and promise—to the very first day in the Garden of Eden.

Eleanor Farjeon was born in London in 1881 into a literary family; her father was a popular novelist of the time. As a child she suffered from ill health and poor eyesight. She was home-schooled and liked to spend hours and hours in the attic surrounded by books. Her father encouraged her to write from the age of five.

Beginning in her teenage years, her poems and stories were published in numerous periodicals. At the age of eighteen she wrote a libretto to an opera—with music by her older brother Harry who was a composer—which was performed by the Royal Academy of Music. Her most famous book was *Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard* (1921). She counted amongst her friends many well-known literary figures, including the American poet Robert Frost.



Eleanor Farjeon

In 1931 Ms. Farjeon wrote “Morning Has Broken” to an old Gaelic tune (first published in 1888) associated with the village of Bunessan, a small village on the Isle of Mull, off the west coast of Scotland. Her poem achieved international fame forty years later when it was included in the 1971 record album *Teaser & the Firecat* by the British rock singer and songwriter Cat Stevens. Rick Wakeman, the keyboardist for the British progressive rock band, “Yes,” wrote the piano accompaniment for the track, which became a hit, rising high in the charts in the UK and in the USA.

“Morning Has Broken” can be found in more than four dozen hymnals. Ms. Farjeon is also known for another popular hymn, the Advent carol “People, Look East” (ELW 248 and WOV 626), which is sung to an old French melody (Besançon) and is a favorite with children’s choirs.

In 1951, Ms. Farjeon became a Roman Catholic. During the 1950s she received three major literary awards. She never married but she had long-term close friendships with at least two men. She died in Hampstead, London and is buried in the churchyard of St John-at-Hampstead.

To listen to Eleanor Farjeon’s “Morning Has Broken” performed by the King’s Message, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9xXyLrq00>. To listen to “Morning Has Broken” by Cat Stevens, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0TInLOJuUM>.

Resources

Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Zonderfan: 1989)
LBW: Lutheran Book of Worship (Augsburg Publishing House: 1978)
WOV: With One Voice (Augsburg Fortress: 1995)
W&P: Worship & Praise Songbook (Augsburg Fortress: 1999)
ELW: Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress: 2006)
Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org>
Hymnary.org: <http://www.hymnary.org>
GIA Publications: <http://www.giamusic.com>
Hymntime.com: <http://hymntime.com>
Singers.com: <http://singers.com>

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