



Queen Anne

LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called to Proclaim God's Love in Christ for Every Person

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✧ *In Worship Today* ✧

Pastor	The Rev. Dr. Dan Peterson
Guest Preacher	Rev. Andy Yee <i>Assistant to the Bishop, NWWA Synod</i>
Cantor	Kyle Haugen
Lector and Intercessor	Jacqui Darroch

*This service of worship can also be seen online. Go to queenannelutheran.org and click on "**WORD OUT**" to find audio, video, and print resources for worship at home, as well as resources to use with children.*

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 7, 2020

“Word Out” audio transcript



Prelude

Chorale partita on FREU DICH SEHR (nos. 1, 5, 6)
Georg Böhm (1661–1733)

Welcome

P: Welcome, this Second Sunday of Advent to Queen Anne Lutheran Church. Wherever you are listening, whatever challenges you might be facing, we invite you into this space: one where you can hear the good news in proclamation, spoken and sung; a time where you can be still, and know God is God.

John calls people to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder their lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord’s coming. Isaiah, which would have been our first reading, gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, “See, your God is coming!” We say it here in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

G: And also with you.

Gathering Hymn

stanza 2

Light One Candle

ELW 240



2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd, gent - ly lead them home-ward.

Children's Message

Stay Focused

Pastor Dan

Hi, I'm Pastor Dan, and this is today's children's sermon.

What's your favorite holiday?

As a kid, I always loved Christmas. But next to Christmas, my favorite holiday was Halloween.

Over the years, I had a bunch of different costumes, but my two favorites were probably Batman, and definitely Darth Vader. Do you have a costume that has been your favorite? If so, what was it? I heard Spiderman and Supergirl were popular this year. Or did you dress up as a monster, like a werewolf, or scarier still, a mummy?

Well, in today's Gospel reading, which you'll hear in just a minute, we encounter a man who wears something like a costume. Only it wasn't Halloween, and he wasn't a monster.

No, his name was John, and he was clothed, we're told, in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. And what's more, get this, he ate bugs – they're called locusts – and wild honey.



Can you imagine?!

But here's the thing: John's appearance can be really distracting. The story, it turns out, isn't about John at all. It's about Jesus. John merely came to introduce him to us.

It's easy to get distracted by John's funny costume. Not to mention his diet of bugs and wild honey. But during Advent and Christmas, our focus, as John himself said, needs to be on the coming of someone else, namely, Jesus.

Let's pray.

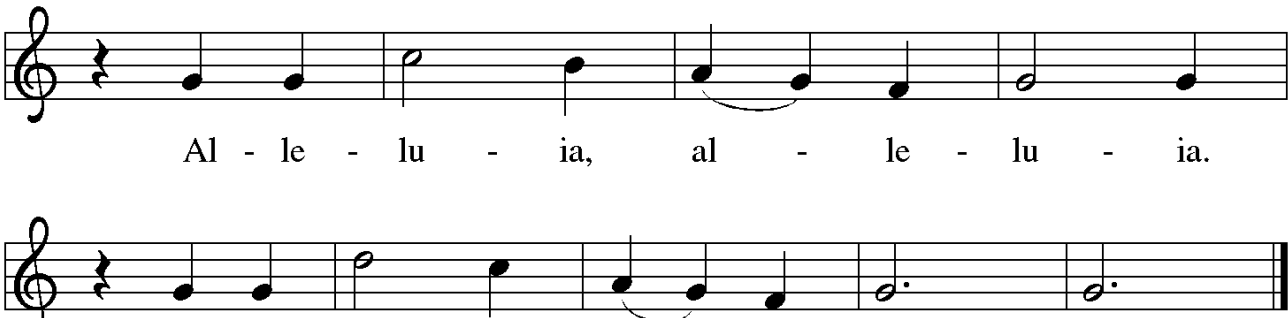
Kind and caring God, keep our focus this season on the coming of your son Jesus Christ and the message of peace he brings to everyone. Fill our hearts with hope, and help us, this season and always, to remember as Jesus did, those less fortunate than we are.

In Jesus' name we pray.


Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Luke 3:4, 6


G: 

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

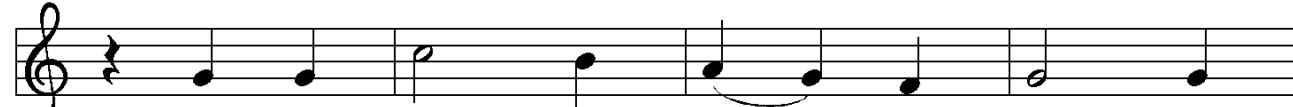


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.


Repeat alleluia



P: Prepare the way of the Lord. All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

G: 

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The Holy Gospel:

Mark 1:1-8

A: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the first chapter.

G: Glory to you, O Lord.

A: ¹The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;

³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”

⁴John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of

repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ⁸I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

A: The Gospel of our Lord.

G: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Andy Yee

Punctuation is powerful, my English teacher, Mrs. Robbins, taught me. And even though I can't remember exactly the example that she used to teach us, it could very well have been something like what this English professor wrote on the board and instructed her students to punctuate correctly:

A woman without her man is nothing, she wrote,

to which all the males in the class wrote:

A woman, without her man, is nothing.

And to which all the females in the class wrote:

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

Siblings in Christ, punctuation is powerful, and it could significantly change the meaning of a sentence!

Grace to you and peace, to you my siblings in Christ, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to focus on verses two and three of our Gospel lesson for today. And it says this:

²As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
³the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.'"

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness. Of course it's John the Baptist. The second and third weeks of Advent are always focused on John the Baptist, right. . . So please don't get me wrong, I'm a big fan of John the Baptist, big fan! And I mean, I got *married* on the third Sunday in Advent! Third Sunday is cemented in my head even more than the wedding date itself, as the pastor used for our wedding text what John the Baptist said to Jesus, that year. "Are you the one, or are we to wait for another?" Truth, that was our wedding text! "*Are you the one, or are we to wait for another?*" So, big fan of John the Baptist!

However, what Mark is trying to do here is to quote Isaiah, conveniently offered as our first lesson for today. And as best our Bible interpreters try to help us with the meaning through English punctuation, we're invited to move down a slightly different path than focusing primarily on the eccentric, camelhair-clothed, locust-and-wild-honey-eating, wilderness guy of John the Baptist. Our Bible interpreters instead offer this from the voice of Isaiah:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

This little difference in punctuation shifts the focus from the man of John the Baptist, and maybe, instead, to the *wilderness*, and *maybe*, what we should then be *doing* in that wilderness. And this might actually help us,

because most of us do not live one of those “Bear Gryll” lives, right, nor do we know many people who do.

However, many of us may know a thing or two about times of wilderness in our lives. And some might even claim to be borderline experts. In my 50-plus years of life, I’ve never experienced a time when we were so politically charged against one another as we have been in these past few years, and our total inability to work together because of those political lines. Without even focusing on black men in our country just yet, who don’t have even the protection of political correctness anymore, little black children are instinctively displaying – meaning not making this up – fear of authority that should be protecting them; and millions of people, in a country that touts its greatness, have either lost their jobs, are in fear of losing their jobs, or are food- or shelter-insecure. And after years of Christian training and practice on trying to overcome barriers that even the church has used to marginalize folks, we are trying to follow caring and safety guidelines now – by keeping each other at arm’s length.

The word that is used to describe the voice in our text is “cries.” The voice *cries*. This is real stuff, real pain, real suffering, real wilderness. For some, those cries are temporary. And so as long as you can sustain the suffering for a while, it might go away. But the tragedy for others, especially if it’s connected to the color of your skin, or if it’s connected to the unjust laws and cultures of our land, is that your suffering may take a lifetime to change. And so *you* may never see that change, and may be doomed to relive this trauma over and over again. This pain and the suffering packed behind the voice that cries out, the voice of someone who is in the wilderness, the voice of those who may very well be suffering and crying that they can’t breathe – is part of this wilderness.

Now more than ever, many people recognize the voice crying in the wilderness. And if this refocus is helpful – from the “wilderness man” to the “times of wilderness” – the next question is: Now what?

In your times of wilderness, what does the prophet Isaiah say? “Prepare the way of God, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Look out, now! Look out! The prophet doesn’t say “ignore it, and one day it will go away.” No, instead, the prophet says, in your wilderness times, *prepare*, because this is exactly where God is going to show up. In those times when your life is a desert, and it’s hard to find life, and you’re dying and maybe you can’t breathe anymore, start making a highway, because this is exactly where God intends to show up. Not later, but quick, right now, so get ready, prepare yourselves, keep awake! Your very time of wilderness and desert *is* the opportune time for God to come – so expect it.

It’s a theme that mimics Jesus’s story, doesn’t it? Let’s be honest. The Cross represents the worst form of wilderness that humans have to offer, but each year we celebrate that God showed up right in the center of that cross.

Mark’s Gospel was written as a response to a major wilderness event for the people of Jerusalem. It was the first Jewish-Roman war, and Jerusalem was captured and the temple was destroyed. And for the Jewish people, we are talking more than just a building. I remember my Hebrew professor teaching us that there were three major things that identify the Jewish people, the land, a king and the temple. So the destruction of the temple was cataclysmic. The response that we have in Mark, then, is intended to help guide our siblings into their defining moment, using the voice of John the Baptist to speak right in the middle of a time when it felt like they had lost everything. So let’s spend the rest of the sermon listening to what the voice was saying.

I’ll begin with the first words of this Gospel text, which must have rung some bells for our Jewish siblings: “the beginning of the good news.” And, which no doubt connected the siblings to the Hebrew creation story. And we, too, as people of faith, also need to remember the Author of our lives. And to be able to proclaim that this is the story that grounds us. Because truth be told, even our own culture will try to lure us into thinking that we will find life in a story based on the violence of power over others, a

culture where some are at the center at the expense of those at the margins; a system, and sometimes very sophisticated and even lawful system, of insiders and outsiders, a pattern of the haves and the have-nots, goodies and baddies like we've always been taught all our lives, and that you are weak, or a "snowflake," even, if you don't praise this hierarchical ordering that helped create great nations for generations. And to top it off, there will be attempts to sell you the narrative that God made them this way, or that this is the way that God meant for things to be.

And if that's what all life is based on, this endless cycle, those on the top, or in the center, and now the Republicans are in power or now the Democrats are in power, we would have learned nothing. And all we are doing is playing that same game of winners and losers with those at the center, because we have the most power, or the biggest guns, or the most votes, or you name it. Up until you have to decide again for the cycle, then, to begin over again.

And when this happens, you then, have a spiritual responsibility to say, "No, this is *not* part of God's divine will!"

We are grounded in a story authored by the God of our scriptures, a God who shares God's dreams, right from – what? – the beginning. All the way, when the voice will finally also cry, "It is finished," on the cross, and the reminding us in between that we are to be about the work, to help everyone realize that we are joined (at the ribs!) with each other and with our creation, and that we are made to be in community. So this is our story.

We are invited to see each other, not as we deserve to be seen, but instead to see each other as one made in the image of God, valuable enough to be found, valuable enough to put in the center when we are marginalized, and that we are to be a part of the work towards freedom into this story. *This* is our story, of what it really means to be fully human and fully alive, authored by the one who voices what "the beginning" of life really looks like. And we have a spiritual responsibility to be the keepers of that story.

Martin Luther King Jr. needed to be grounded in a different story than that was around him, as his voice began to cry those unforgettable words, “I have a dream.” He was in touch and grounded by this other story. That’s what gave him the power, to not only work towards that goal and story, but also gave him the power to do the real hard work in between, of resisting nonviolently, in hopes of one day breaking the cycle of violence, even though that dream might never be realized in his lifetime.

So he said, “I’ve been to the mountaintop,” he also said, “I’ve seen the promised land.” And yet, he was able to say, “I may not get there with you.”

This is the story that grounds us in the wilderness. Our defining story, with which we are bold enough to start, or maybe with these simple words, “the beginning.”

However, let’s also not be fooled into thinking that we can even *hear* this other story. We have been so conditioned for so long to find life by beating our breasts against each other that we can’t even *dream* this bigger story, to even be grounded by it, to even be keepers of it, or even to be transformed by it.

Even in our passion for doing good work, our work for social justice or even our religion itself, or even making sure that we don’t say the bad words, right, make us forget to return to the story that grounds us, or even to listen to it, or to really listen to the cries of the voices among us, those that are suffering in the wilderness. And so, the movements that are rising up, the protests that are happening in the streets, the slogans that are being used over and over again as rally calls, might these be crying voices that we have forgotten to listen?

Could this listening have been so important, that to John the Baptist this is the place where real life begins to be formed among us? In the times when we can be vulnerable enough to listen to those most vulnerable among us... And not as a fake listening that we do sometimes with kids – and kids, by the way, can tell – but to *really* listen, so that we could re-establish,

in authentic ways, our connectedness in God's story. Maybe so much so that we might even be able to cry together.

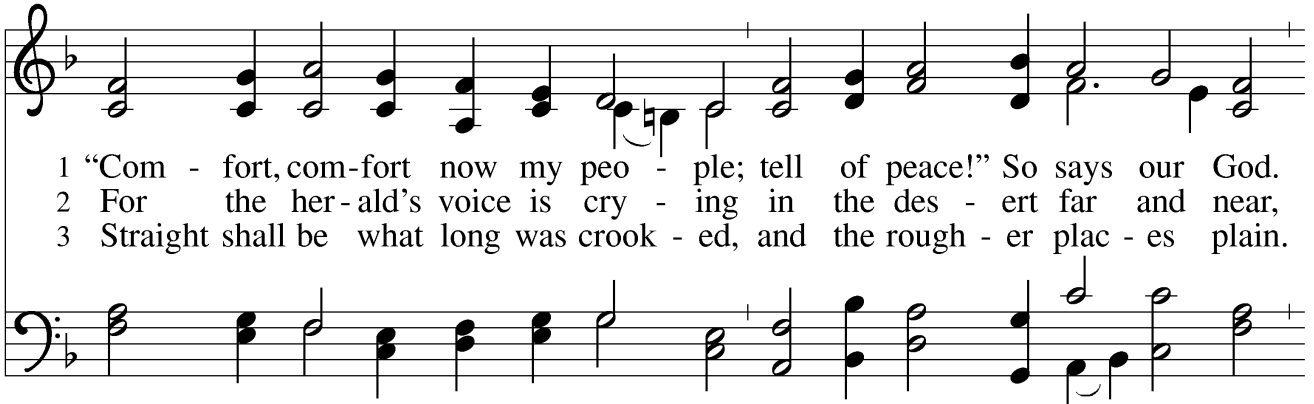
Maybe *this* is why it was so important for all the people to come confessing their sins, for John to proclaim a baptism for the forgiveness of sin. Maybe, unless our sin can find its place in the confession and forgiveness, we will *never* be able to hear the voice in the wilderness.

And lastly, as we live in between "the beginning," and when "it is finished," maybe we are invited to see this in-between time as a significant time, the opportune time, when God can really show up. And then maybe we don't always have to have it all figured out to live into the story, or have all the broken pieces fixed before we can be involved.

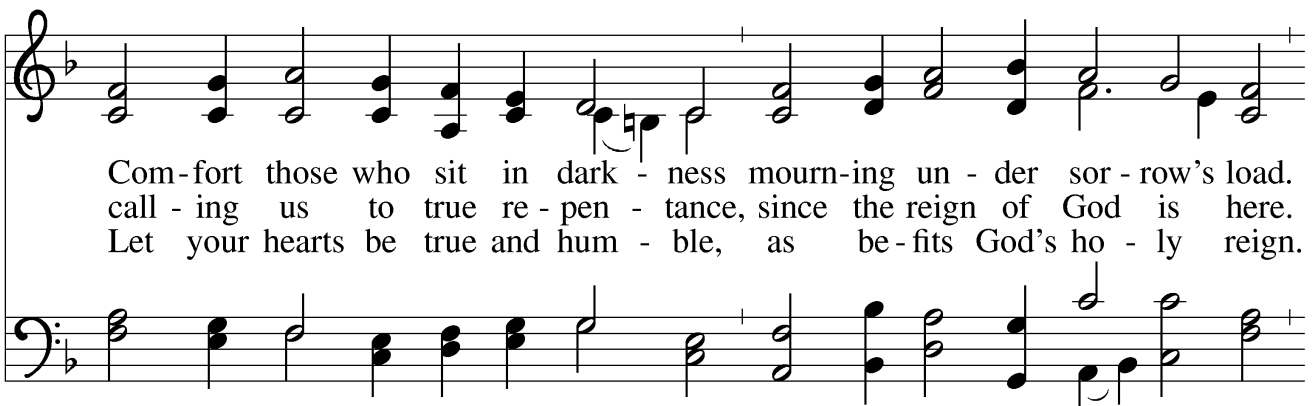
"I have baptized you with water, but the one to come will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Preludes are important to the major movements of music, practice is critical to the actual game. When we are grounded by God's story, and listening with our confessing hearts, maybe each authentic step, maybe, each next faithful step, *is* the story.

And maybe, to that I can truly say, "Thanks be to God."

Blessings to all. Your Synod is grateful to be able to walk with you.
God bless.



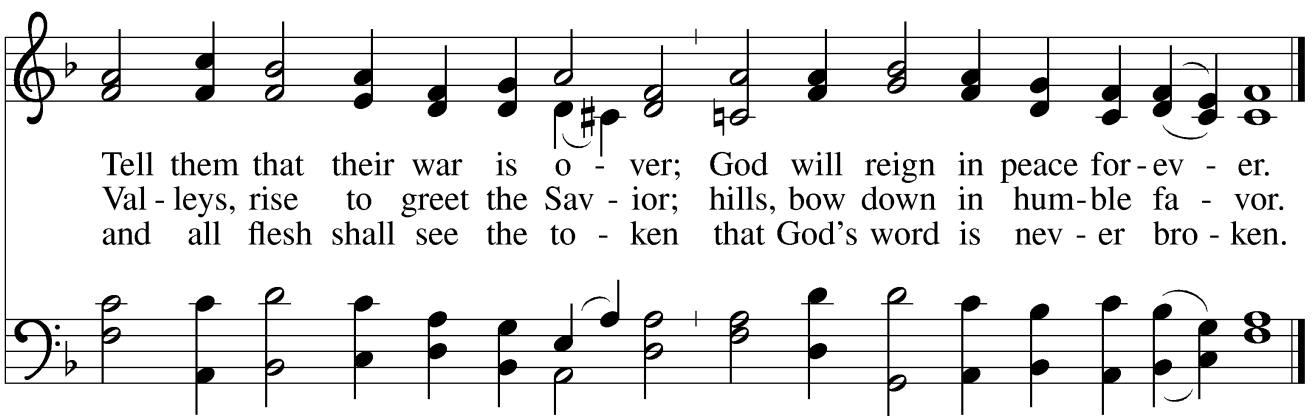
1 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
 2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
 3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn-ing un - der sor - row's load.
 call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
 Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be-fits God's ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim that God's par - don waits for them!
 Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
 For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for-ev - er.
 Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum-ble fa - vor.
 and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

Prayers of the Church

A: God of life and light, comfort your people and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

A brief silence.

A:: Faithful God, you teach us to wait for you with faithfulness and patience. Sustain and support us in our doubts and questions. Nurture our faith as we discern and enact your mission. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Loving God, you set the stars in the sky and breathe life into the earth. Renew the face of creation where it is in need of your healing touch. Mend the wounds of environmental damage and restore balance to ecosystems so that all creation can declare your praise. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Steadfast God, you never tire of seeking justice. Where people suffer from discrimination, judgment, and injustice, speak words of truth and comfort. Lead us toward a world where faithfulness will sprout underfoot and righteousness rain down from above. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Leading God, you ask us to make uneven ground smooth. Make even the disparities between your people. Sustain and support people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Accompany disability advocates who work for a world accessible to all. Teach us to celebrate the great diversity in our midst. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Tender God, you know sorrow and joy alike. We pray for those in our families and congregation who are not joyful in this holiday season. Comfort those who grieve, be a companion to all who are lonely, tend those who are sick or struggling with depression, and gather all people in your healing embrace. Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: For whom or what else do the people of God pray?

A silence is given so that your prayers may be offered.

A: Lord, in your mercy,

G: **hear our prayer.**

A: Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

G: **Amen.**

Announcements

P: We thank you for joining us for this service. If you would like to hear other services or access the newest edition of *the Quill*, our newsletter, we invite you to go to our website at queenannelutheran.org.

P: Receive now the blessing:

Benediction

A: Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

P: Almighty God, the Father, † the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless and preserve you.

G: **Amen.**

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

G: **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

Chorale partita on FREU DICH SEHR (no. 11)
Georg Böhm

About Today's Music

Maybe you can you relate to this sentence: “It just isn’t Advent (or Christmas, or Easter) until I hear...” (fill in the blank). Your cantor can definitely relate to this! For me, there are pieces of music I “need” to play almost every Advent, or else it feels like the season is missing something. Among them is the joyful chorale *partita* (set of variations) on the Genevan psalter tune, FREU DICH SEHR, which has a longtime association with our Hymn of the Day (Comfort, Comfort Now My People).

In today’s organ prelude, listen for the *zimbelstern* (literally, “cymbal star”). Traditionally, the *zimbelstern* is a star-shaped wheel made of wood or metal mounted to the front of the organ case, usually near the top; tiny bells are affixed behind the star, which tintinnabulate as the star rotates. Today’s postlude is composer Georg Böhm’s final variation on this melody, which really brings out its dance-like quality.

– Cantor Kyle Haugen