

Notes to Accompany

Singing Toward Justice: A Songbook for First Parish

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington (MA)

May 17, 2018

The Context of *Singing Toward Justice*

In 2017 First Parish's Music Committee and Racial Justice Coordinating Committee each independently came up with the thought of creating a new songbook for First Parish that would expand the range of our congregational singing. The two groups together received the blessing of the Parish Committee, along with \$1,000 to pay for song permissions and printing.

Under the able leadership of Cheri Minton, the result was *Singing Toward Justice: A Songbook for First Parish*, which was printed in May 2018.

We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to this songbook – especially the composers who allowed us to include their songs for free or nominal sums and First Parish's Music Director Emeritus, Ken Seitz, who assisted with several of the musical arrangements.

Please note that permissions for this songbook were given with the stipulation that it is for congregational singing at First Parish only. We can print only 250 copies. They are to stay at First Parish and be used only in our building and grounds.

The Purpose of these Notes

Sometimes a song can speak for itself. In many cases, though, singers and listeners find that their experience of a song is richer and more resonant if they know something about its context and history – when it was composed, for example, or other important times it has been sung.

Indeed, singing without such context can be a form of misappropriation, especially when we sing songs that are not from the white Christian canon. While it is appropriate to enjoy music from all of the world's traditions, we also need to respect those traditions by learning something about them and recognizing the lived history of the music we are singing.

These notes therefore provide context for the songs included in *Singing Toward Justice*.

We know more about some songs and less about others. Sometimes telling an extended story about a song fits well with the larger goals of a worship service, vigil, or other event, and sometimes only a sentence or two fits well into the flow. But we hope that, when you invite people to sing one of these songs, you will also give them at least a brief introduction that frames the song in its larger context.

If you know something more about one of these songs that you think might be of interest to First Parish folks, please share it with us by emailing songbook@firstparish.info. We will be happy to add more information to this website.

Thank you!

(1) Hineh Ma Tov

“Hineh Ma Tov” is a Jewish hymn traditionally sung at Shabbat feasts. The same words are sung to a variety of melodies around the world. The melody in our songbook is commonly used in the United States and elsewhere, and may be sung either in unison or as a round. Either way, the song should be repeated several times to allow the energy of the music to rise and fall.

Ideally the number of repetitions would not be determined in advance, but would follow the energy of the group. If leading a group that is not familiar with singing a song an undetermined number of times, you might suggest that they listen to each other to figure out when the song is ready to end.

The words come from Psalm 133 and are often translated as “Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers [and sisters] to sit together in unity.”

“Yachad” is related to a word meaning “one,” “only,” or “solitariness” – the connotation here is that people are truly coming together as one. While the word “shevet” literally means “sit,” it is often understood more broadly to connote living or dwelling together.

Imagine people sitting together in a shared space, feeling themselves to be part of a larger whole – as people often do when they are singing together, especially when they sing/chant the same words repeatedly and are attuned to the energy of the group.

(2) Mayim-Mayim (Emmanuel Amiran, 1937)

“Mayim-Mayim” is both a song and a much-loved Israeli folk dance. Many Jewish people (and some non-Jewish people) know and love this song as one they learned in childhood, dancing together in community.

The words are from Isaiah, chapter 12, verse 3: “With joy you shall draw water from the springs of salvation.”

For people who lived in the ancient world, water was very often a symbol of life itself. Isaiah and his contemporaries knew from personal experience what dehydration in the desert heat felt like, and people died quickly if they could not find water. The song evokes joy in water, life, nourishment.

The music was composed by Emmanuel Amiran (also known as Emanuel Pugashov) and the dance was choreographed by Else I. Dublin in 1937 for a festival that celebrated a discovery of water in the desert after a seven-year search.

This quest for water was part of “bringing water to the desert” and “making the desert bloom” – a multi-decade campaign by Jewish settlers to create irrigation systems, plant farms and orchards, and

create thriving communities in the arid Negev desert, which had previously been only sparsely populated by Bedouin nomads.

This history is now controversial because it was related to displacing Palestinian people and creating the state of Israel. At the time, though, the discovery of water in the desert was seen as a life-giving technological miracle. These new irrigation techniques brought hope not just to Israeli nationalists, but also to people in other dry parts of the world where crops depended on uncertain rains and people often suffered and died from famines.

Amiron was a prolific composer and skilled teacher who was born in Warsaw in 1909 and devoted most of his life to nurturing Israeli musical traditions. He studied music in Berlin for three years in the 1920s and then continued his studies in Jerusalem and Great Britain. He moved permanently to what would become Israel in 1936. After the founding of Israel in 1948 he was the new country's first Minister for Music Education, a position he held until his retirement in 1975. He was also an officer in charge of military music and founded the Israeli Army Band.

(3) Gracias por el amor

The origins of this much-loved Spanish hymn seem to be lost to time, and it is often described simply as “traditional.” The hymn is included in the UU Spanish-language hymnal, *Las Voces del Camino* (“voices of the path”), one of whose editors was First Parish member Rev. Lilia Cuervo.

Our English verses were added by First Parish member and musician Dorothy May. They echo the original's simple yet profound spirit of thankfulness for everyday life.

(4) There's a River Flowin' in My Soul (Rose Sanders/Faya Ora Rose Touré, 1965)

Rose Sanders is a Harvard-educated Civil Rights activist and litigation attorney as well as a prolific songwriter and playwright. Born in North Carolina as the daughter of a preacher, she was the first African-American woman to serve as a judge in Alabama and a member of the winning legal team in *Pigford vs. Veneman*, which led to the payment of a billion dollars in damages to black farmers by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. She has founded numerous learning and cultural centers, political and legal organizations, and community initiatives, including the National Voting Rights Museum and the annual Bridge Crossing Jubilee in Selma.

In 2003 she chose to “step away” from her slave name and re-named herself Faya Ora Rose Touré, which combines two traditional West African names with her and her mother's personal names.

She wrote this song in 1965, when she was a 20-year-old student at a historically black college in Charlotte, North Carolina – the same year as the Selma to Montgomery marches for voting rights, Bloody Sunday, and the murders of Jimmie Lee Jackson, Rev. James Reeb, and Viola Liuzzo.

Rev. Jason Shelton offers reflections on a joint choral trip to Montgomery and Selma, Alabama, and leads the General Assembly choir in singing “There's a River Flowing in My Soul” in a wonderful 7-minute video located at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKUsJm7WKfY> .

Meck Groot, who leads Justice Ministries for our New England UU region, reflected that when she first learned that this song was written by an African-American woman, she wondered whether it was appropriate for white people to sing it:

“After all, white people are generally conditioned to believe in our somebodiness. Dominant white culture affirms white people all the time.

Or does it? . . .

In a white supremacist culture, white people are made into “king babies,” to borrow a term from Alcoholics Anonymous. However, even a child knows that ultimate significance cannot depend on being white. True somebodiness does not rest in how we compare to someone else. Yet whiteness constructs false somebodies motivated by external validation.

One of the greatest spiritual challenges for people with systemic privilege is learning that an authentic sense of somebodiness is an inside job, solidified by the love of community that cares about our ultimate significance. When white people’s somebodiness rests in a soul awareness that we have such significance, whiteness will cease to exist.

I am deeply grateful to Judge Rose Sanders for gifting the world with this song.”

(5) Thula Klizeo (Joseph Shabalala, 1987)

Shabalala was born in the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa in 1941 and is the founder of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, a South African black a cappella group that sings in traditional Zulu styles and collaborated with Paul Simon on his famous *Graceland* album in 1986.

Shabalala composed “Thula Klizeo” a year later while riding in a taxi in New York City. With apartheid still in effect, he did not know whether he would ever be able to return to South Africa, and he missed his home and his children.

Nick Page (the conductor of the Mystic Chorale, which rehearses at First Parish) learned “Thula Klizeo” directly from Shabalala. He learned it by rote and recommends teaching it by rote and singing it a cappella, without percussion. It should be repeated several times, so that its tones and rhythms go deep. There is also a dance that goes with the song.

“When you teach this song thoroughly,” Page writes, “with energy and in a way that makes the story behind the song come alive, the experience can be uplifting. If you teach the song quickly and with no respect to the tradition, it can be a disaster.”

Before leading this song, we strongly recommend reading Page’s step-by-step instructions for teaching it (or any other song by rote), which are located at <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/resources/music/chapter5/129364.shtml>

(6) Breaths (Dr. Ysaÿe M. Barnwell, based on a poem by Birago Diop, 1980)

“Breaths” is one of Dr. Ysaÿe Barnwell’s most loved compositions. She wrote about Birago Diop’s poem and this song:

“Hearing this poem, for the first time at a funeral, transformed my grief and affirmed my world view which includes and reveres my ancestors. When I heard the poem a second time years later, it began to sing itself to me, and I am glad that I have been able to share what I heard with you. As often as we call the names of those who have gone on, we enliven them; but we must then learn how to experience them anew. This poem provides entre into the new experience.”

Birago Diop (1906-1989) was a Senegalese poet and storyteller who helped generate global interest in African folktales. He was one of the most famous African francophone writers and a leading voice of the Négritude literary movement, which defied colonialism and claims of European cultural superiority while arguing for the importance of a Pan-African identity and solidarity among people of African descent worldwide.

For nearly forty years Barnwell (born 1946) was a core member of Sweet Honey in the Rock, a troupe of African-American women who draw on African and African American traditions of music, movement, and percussion, as well as a richly spiritual humanism, to make music and share with the world images of powerful black female beauty.

Barnwell began her career as a Unitarian Universalist, and at the age of thirty founded the Jubilee Singers at the All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington D.C. Three years later Bernice Johnson Reagon saw her performing and invited her to join Sweet Honey In The Rock. Barnwell contributed many original compositions to the group, as well as her distinctive bass singing range and her skill as an American Sign Language interpreter.

In her music and teaching, Barnwell seeks to combine an African world-view with African American history, values, and cultural and vocal traditions to build community among singers and non-singers alike. She has led her workshop on *Building a Vocal Community - Singing In the African American Tradition* on three continents.

(7) Mi Shebeirach (Debbie Friedman and Drorah Setel, 1988)

A “mi shebeirach” is a public prayer for healing or blessing of an individual or group, traditionally recited in synagogue when the Torah is being read. It is an optional prayer – not a mandated part of the liturgy – and takes its name from its opening words, “mi shebeirach,” “[May He] who blesses.”

Debbie Friedman (1951-2011) was a musical leader of modern Judaism who brought a new life to many ancient texts. As a sign of her influence, Hebrew Union College renamed its School of Sacred Music in her honor after her untimely death.

“Mi Shebeirach,” her best-known composition, is now sung in synagogues around the world – including Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox congregations. Many congregations that had omitted the mi shebeirach prayer from their liturgies returned to it as they found a deeper meaning through Friedman’s composition. In addition, this song inspired a movement of healing services held in synagogues, homes, hospitals, and by the bedside of people who are sick or dying.

We highly recommend reading the exposition on “Mi Shebeirach” written by its co-author, Rabbi Drorah Setel, and located at <https://forward.com/opinion/134774/debbie-friedman-s-healing-prayer/> .

According to Setel, “Mi Shebeirach” was inspired in part by the AIDS crisis in the gay community. (Debbie Friedman was a lesbian but thought that publicly acknowledging her sexuality would affect her income, so it was not made public until her obituary was published in the *New York Times*.) The song is deliberately gender-inclusive. (Friedman was always public about being a feminist.) “We wanted to be clear,” Setel also explains, “that the Source of Blessing is within us as well as around us, allowing us to be active agents of healing. So we asked for ‘the courage to make our lives a blessing’ in addition to the more passive, traditional request to be blessed.”

(8) ¿Adonde Voy? (Cesário Gabárain, 1980)

Cesário Gabárain (1936-1991) was a Catholic priest and one of the best-known composers of Spanish religious music. Born in the Basque region in Spain, he was ordained at the age of 23 and served as a chaplain at various colleges and nursing homes for about twenty years before later becoming an assistant priest in Madrid and teaching theology and liturgical music.

Gabárain began to compose music after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which reassessed the relationship of the Catholic Church with the modern world and changed Catholic approaches to liturgy, interfaith relations, and the role of lay people in the Church. Among many other changes, Vatican II permitted the use and growth of different styles of music in religious contexts.

Gabárain began to compose hymns that were easy to learn and intended to be sung by an entire congregation – quite a change from the priest-focused Latin liturgy of the pre-Vatican II era. He eventually wrote about 500 hymns. His most-loved hymns capture important messages in beautiful yet simple forms, and are often used to support community and individual prayer.

Here is a full English translation of “¿Adonde Voy?”:

I am on a journey without really knowing
what path to take, which way to go.
Today I wondered if I know where I am,
where I began, what my end will be, what living is for.

I am like the river that runs down to the sea,
on its way to mixing with eternity.
I want to do good on my journey,
so that as I pass by gardens produce flowers, and fields loaves of bread.

In my heart there is an endless battle
between what I want to be and reality.
In my heart God chose to sow
a yearning for life, a thirst for fullness and happiness.

(9) Immortal Love (Kenneth H. Seitz, based on a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier, 1999)

Ken Seitz is a conductor and composer who served as First Parish's music director from 1984 to 2002 and is now our Music Director Emeritus. He has contributed numerous musical arrangements and original choral compositions to the musical life of our congregation.

"Immortal Love" was written by John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), a Quaker and ardent abolitionist who promulgated through his verse a progressive gospel of love and justice. In 1999 the Unitarian Universalist Musician's Network chose "Immortal Love" as the text for its choral composition competition. Seitz's original setting was selected as the winning entry and was first performed at that year's UU General Assembly.

(10) Blue Boat Home (Peter Mayer, based on a melody by Rowland H. Prichard, 2002)

Peter Mayer is a Unitarian Universalist and former Jesuit. He sometimes describes himself as a "scientific mystic" – a person who experiences the interconnectedness of the universe, and humanity's ever-growing understanding of the natural world, as a miracle. He now lives near Minneapolis and is a folk musician and active parent.

"Blue Boat Home" was first inspired by Mayer's explorations on his guitar of Hyfrodol, a nineteenth-century hymn by the Welsh composer Rowland Prichard. Mayer grew up singing this melody in church and it is one of his favorites. He took some rhythmic liberties with the tune. Then he added his own lyrics, which refer to our life on this earth as a grand seafaring journey.

"Blue Boat Home" is one of Mayer's most-loved songs, especially since it was included in the UU hymnal, *Singing the Journey*, also known as "the teal hymnal."

(11) Székely Áldás [Shay-kay ol-dash] (Elizabeth H. Norton, 2002)

This song is based on a traditional Hungarian blessing that is known in Transylvania as the *Házi Áldás* [ha-zi ol-dash] or "House Blessing." It was composed for the choir of First Parish in Concord, Massachusetts, on the occasion of their Musical Pilgrimage to Transylvania in the summer of 2002. It is dedicated to Concord's partner congregation in Székelykeresztúr [Shay-kay care-esh-ter] (hence Székely rather than Házi) and to the musical pilgrims of First Parish Concord.

This setting of the blessing is a "partner song" with the text in Hungarian in one part and in English in the other part. Sing the Hungarian part first in unison, and then the English part. Then sing the combined parts for as long as time will allow. The song can be performed with guitar alone, keyboard alone, or guitar and keyboard combined.

Elizabeth Norton is the Director of Music Ministry at First Parish in Concord. She wrote this about the song:

"I first heard the *Székely Áldás* (Székely Blessing) or *Házi Áldás* (House Blessing) in 2002 at the UUA General Assembly in Quebec City. Rev. John Gibbons recited the Hungarian and the English during a plenary presentation by the UUA's Partner Church Council. Our choir was preparing for its first musical pilgrimage to Transylvania later that summer and when I heard the beautiful blessing in two languages, I thought, "wouldn't they make a wonderful 'partner song' together." I asked John for permission to use the words and his translation and then wrote two

independent melodies that could each stand alone yet made a lovely harmony when sung together. This reflected the relationship between two strong, independent faith communities that had covenanted to be partners, bridging barriers of language, culture and history, creating together what neither congregation could create alone.

“We sang the *Áldás* with our partners in Székelykeresztúr that first summer. It was warmly received then and has subsequently been shared in congregations all over Transylvania and the U.S. It was published in our 2005 hymnal supplement, *Singing the Journey*. When the choir returned to Székelykeresztúr in 2007, we were greeted by the Keresztúri [Care-esh-ter-ee] choir, formed since our first visit, singing a beautiful rendition of the *Székely Áldás*. There were tears.

“In 2002, I knew so little about the *Áldás* or about Transylvania. When I got there, and saw the *áldás* carved into plates displayed on the walls of a Transylvanian pottery market, I began to realize how well-known it was in that culture. I had assumed a lot in taking those words, setting them to music and then bringing them to Transylvania! If I were to encounter the words for the first time today, I would be hesitant about appropriating that traditional text. Even though the song was graciously received and seems to be genuinely appreciated by Transylvanians and Americans, I still blush for that first well-intentioned but privileged assumption.”

(12) Meditation on Breathing (Sarah Dan Jones, 2001)

Sarah Dan Jones describes her mission as spreading the Unitarian Universalist faith through music. She was born in Georgia and raised within Southern music and culture, and is now the Director of Music at the Star King Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Plymouth, NH. A past president of the Unitarian Universalist Musicians’ Network, she has traveled around the country presenting workshops and worship services around the theme of “Building Community Through Music.”

Sarah Dan Jones wrote her song titled “When I Breathe In” shortly after the tragedy of September 11, 2001. Its chorus took on a life of its own and has come to be known as “Meditation on Breathing.” It has been sung all over the country at UU churches, peace rallies, and demonstrations. It was heard on the Virginia Tech campus after the massacre there in 2007 and sung during the 2016 General Assembly when hundreds of UUs did a counter-protest against members of the Westboro Baptist Church who picketed GA to protest our liberal religious faith and pro-LGBT stands.

The following is the text for the verses, a recording of which can be heard at <http://www.sarahdanjones.com/music.html> :

One long day of terror is etched upon my heart
When I reflect on the shock that I felt
As I cried and watched the world fall apart.
Making sense of evil is no small task
Some would say, “Let’s bomb ‘em to hell”
But before we do we should look at our own past.

At times I feel bewildered like I’m lost in a dream
I search for hope in the meaning of truth
As I close my eyes and I focus on peace.
Fear’s a heavy feeling; it can eat you alive

But it can't run and it can't hide
If you breathe these words, then you know you'll survive.

When I'm feeling hopeless and out of control
I clear my mind as I think on a cure
And I center in as I make love my goal.
Is war really an answer? Can we find those to blame?
All we are saying is "Give Peace a Chance"
And I pray to God as I sing this refrain.

(13) Filled with Loving Kindness (words by Rev. Mark Hayes and music by Rev. Ian Riddell)

This song is a condensed version of a core traditional Buddhist meditation, which was taught by the Buddha himself.

The Sanskrit word *mettā* (met-ah) is often translated as "loving-kindness." It might also be translated as compassion, friendliness, love (of a non-passionate sort), or a desire for peace, ease, and well-being. The Buddha said: "Hatred cannot coexist with loving-kindness, and dissipates if supplanted with thoughts based on loving-kindness."

This meditation traditionally starts with focusing *mettā* on oneself – feeling love and acceptance for oneself, and a desire that this person, oneself, be well and peaceful and flourishing. If resistance is experienced, that suggests that feelings of unworthiness or self-hatred are present. The goal is to put such feelings aside, as developing compassion and kindness for oneself is the first step in developing compassion and kindness towards others. The Buddhist tradition teaches that people should ideally will their own well-being equally with the well-being of others, and that one should aim to perceive oneself as well as others with a sense of "on-looking equanimity."

In the second stage the meditation asks you to select a good friend or someone you admire, bring their good qualities to mind, and focus the feeling of *mettā* on that individual. Then the meditation asks you to choose an individual you feel neutral about – probably someone you are acquainted with but don't know well – and direct *mettā* towards them. Then the meditation asks you to choose someone you dislike or are having difficulty with, and direct the feeling of *mettā* towards them.

Finally, the meditation ends by focusing on all four people together – oneself, a friend or teacher, a neutral person, and a perceived enemy – and sending *mettā* to all four of them at once, and then extending the feeling of *mettā* further – to everyone around you, in your neighborhood, your community, your country, the world, and to all living beings. The goal is to send waves of loving compassion spreading outwards.

This meditation is a core practice in many Buddhist communities and can take a variety of forms. Over time, it is hoped, it helps practitioners become compassionate and loving and accepting in all of their relationships and experiences.

The lyrics in our shortened and musical version of this meditation were written by Rev. Mark Hayes and it was sung publicly for the first time when Rev. Hayes was installed at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County in State College, Pennsylvania, in April 2001. The music was composed

by Rev. Ian Riddell, who is the Minister of Music and Worship Arts at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego.

(14) Amen, Blessed Be, Shalom, Salaam (Kenneth H. Seitz, 2017)

Ken Seitz is a conductor and composer who served as First Parish's music director from 1984 to 2002 and is now our Music Director Emeritus. He has contributed numerous musical arrangements and original choral compositions to the musical life of our congregation.

"Amen, Blessed Be, Shalom, Salaam" was inspired by a conversation with First Parish's minister, Rev. Marta Flanagan, about creating a musical benediction for First Parish. Marta suggested the text and Ken composed this song specifically for our new First Parish songbook.

(15) Siyahamba (South Africa, 20th century)

This South African song comes from the apartheid era. Its origins are disputed, but most likely the words or music or both were composed around 1950 by Andries van Tonder (1882-1955), who was an Afrikaans-speaking man living in a predominantly British area of KwaZulu-Natal. He was an elder in the Judith Church, a small Dutch Reformed stone church that was built in 1885 to host *nagmaal* (communion – *nacht maal* or night meal) services on land donated by Mrs. Judith van Tonder. The song was probably first sung as "Ons marseer nou in die lig van God," the Afrikaans version, in the Judith Church. It was translated into Zulu by Thabo Mkize, but nothing else about Mkize seems to be known.

What we do know is in 1978 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa invited a Swedish choral group to tour South Africa. Its musical director, Anders Nyberg, heard and recorded "Siyahamba" at a girls' school in Natal. In 1984 Nyberg published and recorded his own arrangement of "Siyahamba" for four voices.

In the 1990s "Siyahamba" became popular in North American churches and was often described as a freedom song. It has been included in Catholic and United Church of Christ hymnals, as well as the UU hymnal, *Singing the Journey*. Today Americans typically sing it in Zulu and English. It has also been translated into several other languages, including Swahili, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Icelandic, and Arabic.

"Siyahamba" has been performed and recorded by Amadodana Ase Wesile, a popular South African Methodist black men's a capella gospel group. Some people believe it was written by Amadodana. Amadodana came together, however, in 1985, which is after Anders Nyberg published his arrangement of "Siyahamba."

The UUA's website includes this commentary, which seems to be based on the belief that "Siyahamba" has Zulu roots:

"The structure of 'Siyahamba' is cyclic rather than sequential. The lyrics consist of one phrase that is repeated with permutations. Cyclical forms emphasize a spirit of community and allow for a physical response during the performance. This may explain this song's popularity as a processional and offertory as well as a protest or marching song. "Siyahamba" is appropriate for

both sacred and secular settings for it could be sung, “We are standing in the light of peace.” The song may be accompanied by drums, bell, and shakers; and it can be sung a cappella with male voices which is favored by the Zulu tradition.”

The first time “Siyahamba” firmly entered the historical record, however, it was sung by a girls’ chorus. And there is no more reason to translate “God” as “peace” in this song than any other.

(16) Lean on Me (Bill Withers, 1972)

“Lean on Me” was written by the African-American singer-songwriter Bill Withers (born in 1938). *Billboard* rated it the number 7 song of 1972 and *Rolling Stone* included it on its list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. Withers won his third Grammy Award for “Lean on Me” and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2015.

Withers grew up in the coal-mining town of Slab Fork, West Virginia. He was born with a stutter and was 13 years old when his father died. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 18 and served for nine years, during which he overcame his stutter and became interested in singing and writing songs. He wrote “Lean on Me” while living in Los Angeles after the success of his first album.

Many years later Withers discussed the origins of the song during an interview with Songfacts and reflected on how he had been influenced by the Southern rural environment in which he grew up. In cities, he argued, people easily ignore each other, while in rural areas they notice each other and are there for each other. “It’s a rural song that translates probably across demographical lines. Who could argue with the fact that it would be nice to have somebody who really was that way? My experience was, there were people who were that way.” He told a story of having a tire blow out on a backwoods Alabama road. A white man walked over a hill towards him, noted the blowout, and then walked away, “and I’m not too comfortable here because I know where I am,” but then the man returned with a tire and helped him put it on his car.

“They would help you out,” Withers concluded. “Even in the rural South. There were people who would help you out even across racial lines. Somebody who would probably stand in a mob that might lynch you if you pissed them off, would help you out in another way.”

You can read the full interview at http://www.songfacts.com/blog/interviews/bill_withers/.

(17) Swimming to the Other Side (Pat Humphries, 1990)

“Swimming to the Other Side” was written by Pat Humphries, who is one half of Emma’s Revolution – an activist folk music duo named in the spirit of Emma Goldman’s famous statement, “If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution.”

In response to a request from Cheri Minton, Pat Humphries wrote this reflection about the song on April 13, 2018:

“I was living in the Hudson Valley in NY State during a time in American politics not unlike today. My friends in the activist community were feeling overwhelmed and stressed by all the work there was to be done and I felt a sense of responsibility to say something encouraging. When

I sat down to write, I realized that I felt just as depleted and overwhelmed as they did. But I always have music to fall back on. I looked up at the night sky, saw the Big Dipper overhead and just started singing. This song came out whole. It's been a gift to me since, bringing me to people everywhere who long for a sense of connection to something larger than themselves. The song was featured on NPR's All Things Considered and Pete Seeger, who was a friend and mentor to me, was part of the interview where he said 'The powers that be can control the media but it's hard to stop a good song...Pat's songs will be sung well into the 22nd century.' Pete used to sing this song on the banks of the Hudson River at the annual swim across the Hudson, near where he lived in Beacon. Over the years, Pete had inspired and orchestrated tens of thousands of people to clean up the Hudson so that, once again, the river was safe to swim in. His voice still echoes in my ears whenever I sing this song."

First Parish member Helene Newberg constructed Emma's Revolution's first website and later brought them to First Parish to perform. She shared the following memory:

"Pat wrote "Swimming to the Other Side" during the Reagan administration. In 2002, Marika Partridge, an NPR producer, created a segment about Pat and the song, which the producer had learned at a family camp and started wondering where it had come from. I had built and was running Pat's first website. Marika insisted that the website and its brand new eCommerce capability were completely ready before the radio piece aired, suspecting that the national exposure would move a lot of CDs. I still remember watching the PayPal balance spin up the day the piece aired in May, 2002 – I kept refreshing the page to tens and hundreds of dollars worth of new sales as the piece cycled through two hours worth of All Things Considered across the country. Way more sales in an afternoon than Pat had ever seen. It was a game-changer for her music and I was thrilled to have been part of that."

Singer-songwriter Lui Collins composed a descant for "Swimming to the Other Side" in 2000. In 1991 Humphries opened for one of Collins' concerts and closed her set with this then-new song, and Collins fell in love with it. Humphries lent Collins her only recording of the song, on cassette, and Collins had it memorized by the time she got home the next day. In 2002 Collins wrote:

"... Pat's chorus starts out "We are living 'neath the great big dipper...". Every time I heard that, all I could think of was a hymn I'd sung in our Congregational/UCC Church (no, not Methodist, as Marika said), as I was growing up in Barre, Vermont. Our choir director, church organist – and my piano teacher – Nora Akley, would choose the most beautiful and obscure hymns. The music was my favorite part about going to church. One of the hymns we sang was called "We are living, we are dwelling" and was set to a haunting traditional Welsh melody. It was a favorite of mine because of the tune, and all I remembered was the first line of words. But driving around listening to Pat's "We are living neath the great big dipper" all I could think of was "We are living, we are dwelling, in a grand and awful time." Hmm.... I thought, I wonder if I could combine the two? So I went back to my old hymnal, and there it was "We are living, we are dwelling, in a grand and awful time. In an age on ages telling, to be living is sublime. hark! the waking up of nations, Hosts advancing to the fray..." uh oh, I thought, and as I read on I realized this was a call to war, along the lines of "Onward Christian Soldiers," not really the right accompaniment to Pat's call for brotherhood! So, I left it at the first line - updating the translation of "awful" to "awesome" (I do have teenagers, you know!). And I re-worked some of Pat's lyrics to finish off the descant:

"We are living, we are dwelling, in a grand and awesome time
We can worship, we can cherish, all the ones we live beside."

Of course, I had to re-write the melody, because the original Welsh tune didn't fit with Pat's melody and chords.

I loved hearing what Marika did with the piece about the song, how she wove the interviews and her commentary around Pat's complete version of her song, each of the three verses entering at the perfect time. Her interview with Pete Seeger is awe-inspiring, it gave me chills to listen to what he had to say about the song, and about our world and music's place in it. It was surely an honor to be included in this radio piece that I think is simply a work of art."

The full text of Lui Collins' comments is available at <http://www.luicollins.com/music/musings/5-2002.html> . Unfortunately Marika Partridge's interview is now available only in archive format (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1143767>).

"Swimming to the Other Side" was one of the favorite songs of First Parish's former Parish Manager Butch Redding, who died unexpectedly at the age of 57 in 2008. It was sung at his memorial service in our sanctuary.

(18) We Are (Dr. Ysaÿe M. Barnwell, 1991)

"We Are" is a celebration of the connections between generations and the unity and diversity of humanity. Dr. Ysaÿe Barnwell (born 1946) published an illustrated children's book based on its lyrics. In its dedication she wrote: "This book is dedicated to my ancestors, and yours, because at this moment we are the whole reason they existed. . . . And this book is dedicated to you, because you are creating the future."

For nearly forty years Barnwell was a core member of Sweet Honey in the Rock, a troupe of African-American women who draw on African and African American traditions of music, movement, and percussion, as well as a richly spiritual humanism, to make music and share with the world images of powerful black female beauty.

Barnwell began her career as a Unitarian Universalist, and at the age of thirty founded the Jubilee Singers at the All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington D.C. Three years later Bernice Johnson Reagon saw her performing and invited her to join Sweet Honey In The Rock. Barnwell contributed many original compositions to the group, as well as her distinctive bass singing range and her skill as an American Sign Language interpreter.

In her music and teaching, Barnwell seeks to combines an African world-view with African American history, values, and cultural and vocal traditions to build community among singers and non-singers alike. She has led her workshop on *Building a Vocal Community - Singing In the African American Tradition* on three continents.

(19) Sacred Space (Rafael Scarfullery and Diane Taraz, 2006/2007)

"Sacred Space" is one of First Parish's most distinctive hymns. In 2007 we sponsored a hymn-writing contest that was organized by the Music Committee. First Parish member Diane Shriver, who performs and composes music under the name Diane Taraz, wrote the lyrics to "Sacred Space" for this

contest, and some 80 composers set her poem to music.

The winning melody – complete with four-part choir harmony and organ accompaniment – was this lovely setting by Rafael Scarfullery (born 1969), a classical guitarist, organist, composer, and conductor who grew up in the Dominican Republic. He is now the music director and organist at the Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. He has organized six international classical guitar festivals in the Dominican Republic and has performed in Haiti, Turkey, Venezuela, and Canada as well as the Dominican Republic and United States (both mainland and Puerto Rico), including two solo recitals at Carnegie Hall.

Diane shared the following comments about the song:

“There must be space, silence, a bit of nothing, before there can be sound or substance. We fill our space with hopes and comfort, and our interactions are the essence of the sacred.”

“Now and then I hear from a distant church that they would like to sing it with their own melody, and it’s gratifying to think my words are echoing far and wide.”

(20) The Open Table (Mark A. Miller, 2015)

“The Open Table” comes from Mark Miller’s songbook, *Roll Down, Justice!* In the midst of struggles for social justice and freedom from oppressive systems, this collection of songs for congregational worship is intended to help transform and inspire religious communities to be instruments of justice and peace.

Miller is an African American composer and conductor, a lifelong United Methodist, and the grandson, son, brother, uncle, and cousin of United Methodist clergy. Since 1999 Miller has led music for United Methodists and others around the country, and he has been deeply involved in what he considers Christ’s mission of breaking down the dividing walls of hostility and fear in the United Methodist Church. He is an Assistant Professor of Church Music at Drew Theological School and a Lecturer in the Practice of Sacred Music at Yale University, as well as the Minister of Music at Christ Church in Summit, New Jersey.

Miller has also been a teacher and mentor to First Parish’s Music Director, Jonathan Brennand. He led a Saturday music workshop and Sunday worship service at First Parish in April 2018.

Miller believes passionately that music can change the world. He also believes in Cornell West’s maxim that “Justice is what love looks like in public.” His dream is that the music he composes, performs, teaches, and leads will inspire and empower people to create the beloved community.

How, he asks, can music reach across time and space and social location to form communities who sing with unity and joy? How can we sing not only songs of thanksgiving, but also songs about justice-making and reconciliation?

(21) Life Calls Us On (Jason Shelton and Kendyl Gibbons, 2010)

“Life Calls Us On” was sung at the UU General Assembly in Providence, which was attended by roughly twenty First Parish members, and at the ordination of First Parish member Rev. Wendy Page on October 15, 2017.

Its words were written by Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons, who is the senior minister of the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in Kansas City, Missouri. She is a lifelong UU, past president of the UU Ministers Association, former co-dean of the Humanist Institute, and co-editor of *Humanist Voices in Unitarian Universalism*.

Its music was composed by Rev. Jason Shelton, who is a leading UU musician and the Associate Minister for Music at the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Nashville, Tennessee. His compositions have been performed in churches and concert halls throughout North America. Through his compositions, conducting, and workshops, Shelton seeks to redefine music ministry in the liberal religious tradition for the 21st century.

Shelton starts with the premise that “what we sing is who we are.” He is fluent in a wide variety of musical styles, which he considers an important musical and spiritual discipline. He believes that we live in a world where our diversity can be celebrated, and where the musics of many peoples intertwine and offer new possibilities for the sonic expression of our deepest values and commitments.

Shelton holds a BA in Classics from Saint Meinrad College, a Catholic seminary in Indiana, and spent three years as a Franciscan brother in Chicago. These formative years had a deep impact on his personal and spiritual understanding and still inform his theological and social/ethical foundation, but they proved to be a less-than-perfect vehicle for his continuing journey.

At a friend’s invitation, Shelton visited the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville in the spring of 1998. He felt an instant connection there and was hired as its Director of Music that summer. Since then, Shelton has been exploring how a Unitarian Universalist ministry of music might come to life both in the congregation and the larger community. In 2003 he completed an M. Div. from Vanderbilt Divinity School, and he was ordained to the Unitarian Universalist ministry in 2004.

Shelton has served on the board of directors for the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network and was the first chair of its professional development initiative. He was also a member of the UUA’s New Hymn Resource Commission, which created *Singing the Journey*. His first major work, *Sources: A Unitarian Universalist Cantata* (also with words by Rev. Kendyl Gibbons) was composed in 2006 and has been performed nearly 20 times around the U.S.

Shelton is also the artistic director of a semi-professional chorus in Nashville called Portara Ensemble, which he describes as his “clandestine UU ministry”: “Through our community partnerships we’ve addressed issues like homelessness, reintegration of the formerly incarcerated into society, and caring for people with Alzheimer’s, all using music to weave a message of connection to these larger issues in our community, and using music to open our hearts to the work we are called to do to make life more beautiful for all.”

(22) I Dream of a Church (Mark A. Miller, 2015)

“I Dream of a Church” comes from Mark Miller’s songbook, *Roll Down, Justice!* In the midst of struggles for social justice and freedom from oppressive systems, this collection of songs for congregational worship is intended to help transform and inspire religious communities to be instruments of justice and peace.

Miller is an African American composer and conductor, a lifelong United Methodist, and the grandson, son, brother, uncle, and cousin of United Methodist clergy. Since 1999 Miller has led music for United Methodists and others around the country, and he has been deeply involved in what he considers Christ’s mission of breaking down the dividing walls of hostility and fear in the United Methodist Church. He is an Assistant Professor of Church Music at Drew Theological School and a Lecturer in the Practice of Sacred Music at Yale University, as well as the Minister of Music at Christ Church in Summit, New Jersey.

Miller has also been a teacher and mentor to First Parish’s Music Director, Jonathan Brennand. He led a Saturday music workshop and Sunday worship service at First Parish in April 2018.

Miller believes passionately that music can change the world. He also believes in Cornell West’s maxim that “Justice is what love looks like in public.” His dream is that the music he composes, performs, teaches, and leads will inspire and empower people to create the beloved community. How, he asks, can music reach across time and space and social location to form communities who sing with unity and joy? How can we sing not only songs of thanksgiving, but also songs about justice-making and reconciliation?

(23) All Along the Journey (Diane Taraz, 2017)

Diane Taraz is the stage name of First Parish member Diane Shriver, whose warm soprano voice often graces our sanctuary. She commented about her song:

“My new words for a beloved old melody trace the cycle of water as a metaphor for our lives. We are always taking on new forms as we grow and age, but remain our essential selves despite continuous change. ‘The same, and not the same’ distills this mystery and evokes the unknowable nature of being.”

“ ‘Shenandoah,’ a traditional American folk song, probably came from Canadian and American fur traders traveling the Missouri river in canoes in the early 1800s. It was picked up by sailors as a handy work song and soon circled the globe. When sea shanties became popular on shore its evocative melody pleased generations of singers.”

General Note on Freedom Songs

Freedom songs (also known as Civil Rights songs or Civil Rights anthems) were essential to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Meetings often included more singing than talking, while marches and demonstrations were held together with songs. The act of singing together unified people and drew them together into shared emotions – hope, grief, determination, joy, courage, and celebration. The songs lifted people’s hearts and spirits. They also made it more possible to face fear, the physical discomfort of too much walking, and the ever-present threat of violence. And sometimes

they were used to pass the time while waiting for something to happen – in a church while waiting for a speaker to arrive, or in a jail cell packed with demonstrators.

“The freedom songs are playing a strong and vital role in our struggle,” Rev. Martin Luther King said in 1961. “They give the people new courage and a sense of unity. I think they keep alive a faith, a radiant hope, in the future, particularly in our most trying hours.”

A year later a Georgia NAACP official underlined the importance of music for the movement’s ability to draw in people and give them courage: “The people were cold with fear. Music did what prayers and speeches could not do in breaking the ice.”

The melodies of freedom songs were often familiar to black Southerners, as many of these songs were originally black spirituals, gospel songs, Baptist and Methodist hymns, and folk songs. Sometimes, though, people composed songs specifically for the movement. Either way, freedom songs tended to be repetitive and rhythmic. Many of them were “zipper songs” or “pocket songs,” meaning that the lines were mostly identical from verse to verse while one or two words changed. Such songs are easy to learn and to sing.

People commonly adapted freedom songs to match the needs and mood of the moment. Indeed, this is a long tradition in black gospel singing, which encourages a song leader to improvise if the spirit so moves. Freedom songs were frequently changed to reflect current circumstances, often including very specific events, issues, and personalities as well as the broader goals, visions, and motivations of the movement. Sometimes a song leader would plan such changes ahead of time, but they could also emerge spontaneously from the crowd when someone would shout out a new line and the group would pick it up and sing it. Such improvised verses were sometimes later repeated in other circumstances and became part of the song.

It is perfectly appropriate for First Parish folks to adapt freedom songs to match the congregation’s current mood and needs. That is the nature and tradition of these songs.

Both the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded groups called Freedom Singers. The Freedom Singers helped spread the word of the movement by singing at marches, churches, and concert halls and recording a rich mixture of traditional black spirituals and folk songs (sometimes but not always with the words updated) and newly composed freedom songs. Bernice Johnson Reagon (born 1942, and later the founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock) helped found the SNCC Freedom Singers during the Albany Movement of 1961. She later commented that they “called ourselves a singing newspaper,” while SNCC’s communications director, Julian Bond, described the Freedom Singers as SNCC’s invaluable “public face,” reaching out across racial and regional divides to raise political and financial support for the movement.

Most of the time, though, freedom songs were not for performance. Freedom songs were sung by ordinary people, with ordinary voices, who used music to strengthen themselves as they called for justice, freedom, and radical change.

As Bernice Johnson Reagon put it: “The mass meetings always started with these freedom songs. Most of the meeting was singing. Songs were the bed of everything, and I’d never seen or felt songs do that before.” Elsewhere she commented that “After the song, the differences among us would not be as great.”

In his 1964 book, *Why We Can't Wait*, Rev. Martin Luther King called songs “the soul of the movement.” Civil rights activists, he explained, “sing the freedom songs today for the same reason the slaves sang them, because we too are in bondage and the songs add hope to our determination that ‘We shall overcome, Black and white together, We shall overcome someday.’ ”

(24) Come and Go With Me (African-American traditional and Civil Rights freedom song)

[See General Note on Freedom Songs, above]

“Come and Go With Me” is a traditional gospel blues song that was first recorded in 1930 by Blind Willie Johnson, a Texas-born African American singer and guitarist and evangelist, and Willie B. Harris, his common-law wife and a singer in her own right. It has also been recorded by Odetta, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Guy Carawan, Peter, Paul & Mary, and many others.

Some people believe that enslaved people used this song to signal that the singer was planning an escape and to invite others to go with them. It is certainly possible that enslaved African Americans sometimes used this song as an encoded message that they could claim, if questioned, was just about heaven.

During the Civil Rights era, “Come and Go With Me” was often sung as a joyous and upbeat celebration of hope. It can go on for a long time if verses are repeated, and it can be a good way to keep up the spirit of a crowd that is marching or otherwise in motion.

Bernice Johnson Reagon wrote:

“The text of *Come and Go with Me to that Land* calls us to come and go to that land where we’ll all be united. . . . This African American spiritual describes a number of conditions and goals. The singer is journeying, moving from where she is to a better place. Although the word ‘land’ is used to name the place, conditions conveying the nature of the place are described in each cycle of the song. This song can go on for a long time. As a child, I was sure it must be heaven that we were being called to consider – no pain, no sickness, nothing but joy, no more hatred.”

(25) When the Spirit Says Do (African-American traditional and Civil Rights freedom song)

[See General Note on Freedom Songs before song 24]

“When the Spirit Says Do” was sung at a multitude of demonstrations, mass meetings, and marches during the late 1950s and 1960s. It helped people gain courage in the face of opposition and violence, as they felt inspired by something greater than both themselves and the people fighting against them.

This song played a special role during the events in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. Jimmy Lee Jackson was killed by state troopers in the nearby small town of Marion when the young people of Marion held a rare nighttime demonstration to save their pastor, Rev. James Orange, from being taken from the local jail and lynched for encouraging people to fight for voting rights. After Jackson died, protestors planned a march for voting rights from Selma to the capitol in Montgomery in his honor. This march was violently turned back by state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday, but

succeeded on its third attempt under the protection of federal troops. Two UUs – Rev. James Reeb and volunteer Viola Liuzzo – were killed during these events.

African American men were important to the civil rights movement, as they generally controlled the churches and businesses that were essential gathering spaces for mass meetings and other forms of organizing. Most of the people who were considered civil rights leaders were men. But the people marching were disproportionately women and young people. Joanne Bland, the co-founder of the National Voting Rights Museum in Selma, was just 11 years old when she was beaten unconscious on Bloody Sunday.

The folklorist Ethel Raim transcribed the following verses to “Do What the Spirit Says Do” from the singing of young people in Selma:

We’re gonna do what the spirit says do . . .
You gotta do what the spirit says do . . .
You gotta march when the spirit says march . . .
You gotta sing . . .
You gotta moan . . .
You gotta picket . . .
You gotta vote . . .
You gotta move . . .
You gotta pray . . .
You gotta preach . . .
You gotta shout . . .
You gotta rock . . .
You gotta cool it . . .
You gotta love . . .
You gotta die . . .

(26) Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round (African-American traditional and Civil Rights freedom song)

[See General Note on Freedom Songs before song 24]

This song is based on an old spiritual and was introduced to the movement by Rev. Ralph Abernathy, who was a Baptist minister, a close friend and mentor of Rev. Martin Luther King, and one of the organizers of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Rev. Abernathy taught it one evening during a mass meeting at the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia. This was the summer of 1962, when for the second time the black people of Albany were rising up to demonstrate repeatedly against segregation and white officials were responding with mass arrests and beatings.

Guy Carawan, a white singer who was devoted to the movement (and served as music director and song leader at the Highlander Center in Tennessee), later recalled: “It immediately caught on and became widely used in the demonstrations. A nationally televised CBS documentary showed spirited students rhythmically clapping and singing “Ain’t gonna let Chief Pritchett turn me ’round” while the policemen picked them up, two [policemen] to a student, and carried them into the paddy wagons.”

The folklorist Ethel Raim transcribed the following verses:

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round . . .
Ain't gonna let Chief Pritchett . . .
Ain't gonna let no police dogs . . .
Ain't gonna let Nervous Nellie . . .
Ain't gonna let no Uncle Tom . . .
Ain't gonna let segregation . . .
Ain't gonna let Mayor Kelley . . .
Ain't gonna let no fire hose . . .
Ain't gonna let no jailhouse . . .
Ain't gonna let no injunction . . . (after a federal injunction prohibited further demonstrations)

This is a song of defiance, and it is most appropriately sung if the singers are actively fighting against some particular injustice. In that case, adding words that reflect the current effort is perfectly appropriate.

Whatever verses you choose, it is important to end with “Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round . . .”

The original spiritual was titled “Don't You Let Nobody Turn You Around” and was first recorded by the Dixie Jubilee Singers in 1924.

(27) Eyes on the Prize (African-American traditional and Civil Rights freedom song)

[See General Note on Freedom Songs before song 24]

An old spiritual included the words: “Got my hand on the gospel plow. / Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now. / Keep your hand on the plow, hold on.”

In 1957 Guy Carawan, a folk musician and musicologist and activist who worked at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, visited John's Island in South Carolina, near Charleston. John's Island had a community of Gullah people, African Americans who lived in the lowcountry from North Carolina to northern Florida, some on the coastal plain and some on the sea islands. The ancestors of modern Gullah people worked on large plantations and were sufficiently isolated from white Americans that they had developed their own creole language, Gullah, that is based on English but contains many African loan words and grammar structures. They also developed a distinctive creole culture that reflects the linguistic and cultural heritage of a variety of West African and Central African ethnic groups.

In 1948 a man named Esau Jenkins founded a Progressive Club to encourage political education and voting registration, with the goal of improving the lives of African American people in the Charleston area. Nine years later Jenkins, Septima Clark, and Bernice Robin started the first Citizenship School on John's Island. This program was very influential and inspired similar Citizenship Schools in African American communities throughout the southeast.

The Progressive Club invited Guy Carawan to come teach and lead songs at one of the Citizenship School's programs. One of the songs he shared was “Keep Your Hand on the Plow, Hold On,” which he knew from the labor movement. After the program another member of the Progressive Club, Alice

Wine, took him aside and said, “We know a different echo to that song – keep your eyes on the prize, hold on.” Carawan loved the new refrain and began to use it as he traveled throughout the South, led singing at meetings and marches, and helped train civil rights leaders at the Highlander Center.

This story hints at the breadth of the freedom movement beyond the stories of Montgomery and Birmingham, Ole Miss and Lowndes County, that we usually hear. The men and women of John’s Island’s Progressive Club were organizing African Americans to vote seven years before Rosa Parks (who had recently returned from a training at the Highlander Center) refused to give up her seat on the Montgomery bus.

People often credit Alice Wine with writing “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize.” It is possible that Wine originated the new line, but it seems more likely that it emerged as she said – from a folk process in the John’s Island community.

There is no authoritative version of this song. Both its old and new variants have been sung and recorded with many different verses, some of which also appear in other spirituals and freedom songs. The freedom song version typically begins with the first verse in our songbook – “Paul and Silas were bound in jail, / Had no money for to go their bail” – and can go in many different directions from there. Verses 1-5 in the songbook together tell a story about freedom, while verses 1-2 followed by A-C might be more appropriate for an activist event. People should sing whichever verses feel right for the occasion.

Pete Seeger made the following comment about the song’s musicality and its African echoes:

“A technical note about the flatted seventh note of the scale (the word ‘on’ in ‘hold on’). It clashes with the accompaniment. African tradition tends to do this. It also lowers the third, and raises the fourth. This makes problems for musicians trying to accompany the songs on keyboard instruments or fretted instruments. But keep in mind that most of these songs were composed and usually sung without accompaniment. The blues tradition solved it by singing the flatted, minor notes but accompanying the song with major chords. Likewise, the black folk singer Huddie Ledbetter accompanied many ‘minor’ melodies with major chords on his twelve-string guitar. But this song is usually accompanied in a minor, although it tends to overemphasize the flat notes.

“And a reminder: no two singers sing this song alike, and you, the reader, should make the decision – if you want to try singing the song – exactly what notes you want to sing or slide around.”

The melody in our songbook is an arrangement by Ken Seitz, who listened to many renditions of the song and developed what he thought was a fair one.

Given that the song doesn’t fit well with Western instruments, it might make sense to sing it a cappella with percussion to keep the rhythm – clapping will do. The Gullah people of Johns Island certainly didn’t have a piano or organ when they were singing it.

The building that eventually housed the Progressive Club was badly damaged in a hurricane and there don’t seem to be any photos from before it was ruined. Below left, however, is a photo of the Moving Star Hall, a John’s Island praise hall that housed an African American religious, social, fraternal, and charitable community organization that Alice Wine was a member of and gave rise to the Moving Star Hall Singers (below right). Imagine people singing together there.



(28) Building Bridges (1983)

These words were sung during the 19-year Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, which protested the installation of U.S. nuclear weapons on the Greenham Common military base in Berkshire, England, and the threat of nuclear war more generally. The organizers specifically chose to include women only and regularly invoked women’s identity as individual and collective mothers who were concerned for the safety of their children and future generations.

The camp began in September 1981 when 36 members of a Welsh group, Women for Life on Earth, chained themselves to the base’s fence. In 1982 roughly 30,000 women surrounded the base and in 1983 about 70,000 protestors formed a 14-mile human chain between the base and an ordinance factory. There were also other peace camps at more than dozen sites in Europe, but Greenham Common was best known, in part because it was repeatedly the location of large and small demonstrations, some of which included nonviolent civil disobedience and led to arrests. The Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp continued until 2000 and is now marked by a memorial.

Many of the women at the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp were Quakers, also known as Friends. One of them was Elizabeth Cave, who heard “Building Bridges” at the camp and shared it with the larger British Quaker community. The song has become part of Quaker tradition and was published in *Worship in Song: A Friends Hymnal*. The word “Friends” in the last line may be heard with a double meaning – generic friends and Quaker Friends.

(29) Hymn to Freedom (Oscar Peterson and Harriette Hamilton, 1963)

“Hymn to Freedom” is a much-loved jazz instrumental or choral piece that has been performed all over the world, including at President Barack Obama’s first inauguration in 2009. It is sometimes called the unofficial anthem of the American civil rights movement. It was, however, composed and popularized by admiring observers of that movement, not its active participants.

The music to “Hymn to Freedom” was composed by the great Afro-Canadian jazz pianist, composer, and improvisational artist Oscar Peterson (1925-2007), whom Duke Ellington dubbed the “Maharaja of the keyboard.” In 1962 Peterson was in a recording session with his producer and friend, Norman Grantz, who challenged him to compose and record on the spot a song with a “definitive early-blues feel.” For inspiration, Peterson drew on his memories of various church choirs and congregations that

he heard as a child, growing up as a black Baptist in Montreal. Granz loved the result, and when he asked Peterson for a title his mind turned to Rev. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. Call it “Hymn to Freedom,” Peterson replied. He later dedicated the piece – his most popular in a career that won him eight Grammy Awards and a multitude of other honors – to Rev. Martin Luther King.

The lyrics to “Hymn to Freedom” were written by Harriette Hamilton, who had been writing lyrics for the Malcolm Dodd Singers, a popular backup group at the time. According to Hamilton, “All the lyrics had to do was express in very simple language the hope for unity, peace and dignity for mankind. It was easy to write.”

Peterson’s early piano training was in the classical European tradition, though even as a child he was also captivated by the African American traditions of jazz, boogie-woogie, and ragtime. He regularly played with both black and white musicians, and once commented: “The music field was the first to break down racial barriers, because in order to play together, you have to love the people you are playing with, and if you have any racial inhibitions, you wouldn’t be able to do that.”

Peterson toured the United States at a time when racial discrimination was blunt. When he first performed at Carnegie Hall in 1949 his name could not be included in the concert billing. Later he credited Grantz, who was white, for standing up for him and other black artists when they toured the American South. Once Grantz faced down a gun-toting police officer who wanted to keep Peterson and his colleagues from using a “whites only” taxi.

Peterson’s widow, Kelly Peterson, added in an email to Cheri Minton: “The Canadian Judge Advocate General branch [which administers military justice throughout Canada] has also adopted it as their official March, so it is performed at all official government ceremonies here.”

(30) Cuando el Pobre (José Antonio Olivar & Miguel Manzano, 1971)

“Cuando el Pobre” – or “When the Poor Ones” – is often described as a Latin American hymn, but both its music and words were written by men who were born in Spain and did the predominance of their education and professional work in Spain. Its composer, Miguel Manzano (b. 1934), was born in Aillamor de Cardozo, which is near Spain’s border with Portugal, and at age eight began to serve as cantor at the Cathedral of Zamora. He studied at the Higher School of Sacred Music in Madrid and the Catholic Institute of Paris, and was a professor at the Higher Conservatory of Music in Salamanca, Spain. José Antonio Olivar (b. 1939) was born to a seafaring family on the northern coast of Spain. He lost both parents and four brothers to tuberculosis by the age of eight and was raised by his grandmother until he entered a Catholic seminary at the age of thirteen. He was ordained at the age of 25, but after four years as a parish priest decided to relinquish his vows and pursue a career as a poet and journalist. He settled in Madrid and began to write texts for religious songs, among them “Cuando el Pobre.”

This hymn was first published in 1971, and some see in it reflections of liberation theology, which at that time was influencing Catholics in Latin America and to a lesser extent worldwide. Liberation theology argues that true Christian faith requires a “preferential option for the poor” – seeing the world from the perspective of oppressed and marginalized people and taking action against poverty and unjust social and political structures. Liberation theology developed within the Latin American Catholic Church in the 1950s and 1960s in response to the intense poverty, inequality, and social

injustice found in many Latin American countries. Its practitioners see it as a return to the gospel and practice of the early Christian church. Its opponents charged it with being Marxist in its thinking and focusing too much on institutional rather than personal sin. By the 1980s the Vatican had expressed concern about certain aspects of liberation theology, but it remains an influence in some Catholic communities.

Carlton Young, the editor of the *United Methodist Hymnal*, wrote:

“The central teaching is the classic liberation motif that God in Christ is seen and experienced in the plight of the rejected of society: the homeless, the poor, and the parentless. In life’s journey, we are closer to God when we love them and share from our abundance of food, clothing, and shelter. Those who choose the alternative – greed, hate, and war – will ‘go away into eternal punishment’ (Matthew 25:46a).”

Pablo Sosa, a Methodist pastor in Argentina, similarly commented:

“The stanzas express beautifully the strange paradox of the poor ones giving away to others, the thirsty sharing water with us, and the weak strengthening the weaker. The refrain states clearly that when that happens ‘God himself (herself) walks on our own way’ . . . In other words, it is from within the poor, the weak, the oppressed, that God’s salvation will come, as shown by God on Christmas Eve.”

First Parish’s songbook includes the first two verses of “Cuando el Pobre” both in Spanish and in the English translation by Rev. Martin A. Seltz, a Lutheran minister and musician. The full texts are:

Cuando el pobre nada tiene y aún reparte,
cuando alguien pasa sed y agua nos da,
cuando el débil a su hermano forta lece,
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar;
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar.

Cuando alguno sufre y logra su Consuelo,
cuando espera y no se cansa de esperar,
cuando amamos, aunque el odio nos rodee,
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar,
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar.

Cuando crece la alegría y now inunda,
cuando dicen nuestros labios la verdad,
cuando anoramos el sentir de los sencillos,
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar,
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar.

Cuando abunda el bien y llena los hogares,
cuando alguien donde hay Guerra pone paz,
cuando “hermano” le llamamos al extraño,
va Dios mismo, en nuestro mismo caminar,
va Dios mismo en nuestro mismo caminar.

When the poor ones, who have nothing, still are giving;
when the thirsty pass the cup, water to share;
when the wounded offer others strength and healing:
we see God, here by our side, walking our way;
we see God, here by our side, walking our way.

When compassion gives the suffering consolation,
when expecting brings to birth hope that was lost;
when we choose love, not the hatred all around us;
we see God, here by our side, walking our way,
we see God, here by our side, walking our way.

When our spirits, like a chalice, brim with gladness,
when our voices, full and clear, sing out the truth,
when our longings, free from envy, seek the humble,
we see God, here by our side, walking our way,
we see God, here by our side, walking our way.

When the goodness poured from heaven fills our dwellings,
when the nations work to change war into peace,
when the stranger is accepted as our neighbor,
we see God, here by our side, walking our way,
we see God, here by our side, walking our way.

(31) Vienen con alegría (Cesário Gabárain, 1979)

Cesário Gabárain (1936-1991) was a Catholic priest and one of the best-known composers of Spanish religious music. Born in the Basque region in Spain, he was ordained at the age of 23 and served as a chaplain at various colleges and nursing homes for about twenty years before later becoming an assistant priest in Madrid and teaching theology and liturgical music.

Gabárain began to compose music after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which reassessed the relationship of the Catholic Church with the modern world and changed Catholic approaches to liturgy, interfaith relations, and the role of lay people in the Church. Among many other changes, Vatican II permitted the use and growth of different styles of music in religious contexts.

Gabárain began to compose hymns that were easy to learn and intended to be sung by an entire congregation – quite a change from the priest-focused Latin liturgy of the pre-Vatican II era. He eventually wrote about 500 hymns. His most-loved hymns capture important messages in beautiful yet simple forms, and are often used to support community and individual prayer.

The English lyrics in our version of the hymn are a poetic translation from the Spanish by First Parish member and musician, Dorothy May.

(32) Keep on Moving Forward (Pat Humphries, 1984)

“Keep on Moving Forward” is the first song written by Pat Humphries, who is one half of Emma’s Revolution – an activist folk music duo named in the spirit of Emma Goldman’s famous statement, “If I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution.”

In response to a request from Cheri Minton, Pat Humphries wrote this amazing history of the song on April 13, 2018:

“I was working part-time as an Arts Administrator on contract with the National Park Service in Ohio, near where I grew up. My boss called me into his office because they were making my position full-time and he wanted to offer it to me, first. I had been working three jobs and going to college part-time, but I said to him, ‘I think I might want to be a songwriter.’ So I took a week off work—unpaid—and drove to the Omega Institute in NY to take a workshop with songwriter and labor organizer, Si Kahn. The building where the workshop was being held was at the top of a hill. I was anxious about the workshop and the awareness that I was at a crossroads. I kept saying to myself, ‘You can’t turn back, you can’t turn back.’ We went around the room and, in the first exercise, I sang ‘never turning back, never turning, back.’ Si said, ‘Take the next 10 minutes and finish the song.’ I wrote ‘Keep on Moving Forward.’ It was the first song I wrote as an adult. After I tearfully sang the song for the class, the first words I heard were from a songwriter from Australia named Judy Small, who said, ‘I want to record that song.’ She did and it became well-known in that country. Years later, the song was sung to open the NGO Forum of the 4th UN World Conference on Women, outside of Beijing in 1995, a gathering of 30,000 women from around the world. The song became the unofficial anthem of the Conference and was translated into seven languages. In 1998, I sang the song in the UN General Assembly chambers at a memorial for Congresswoman Bella Abzug. They showed a film of her life that included footage of Bella at the Beijing Conference saying, ‘It’s not enough to never turn back, we have to keep on moving forward.’ In that moment, I announced that she was right and I officially changed the name of the song.”

(33) Give Light (Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino, 1996)

“Give Light” was composed by Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino, who are collectively known as Magpie. They are award-winning singers, songwriters, musical historians, playwrights, actors, and social activists, and have performed together since 1973. They frequently raise their voices in support of the ongoing struggles for civil rights, freedom, justice, and peace, and are internationally known for their musical work in the environmental movement. They are proud to be, as Pete Seeger said of them, “more links in the chain,” dedicating their lives and their music to leaving this world a better place.

Both Greg and Terry, who are white, began to play music in the early sixties as they engaged with the civil rights movement. Greg’s father worked for the National Urban League and members of the family became involved in local action in the movement. Terry spent many of her childhood summers with her mother’s family in the deep south, where she witnessed the cruelty of racism and the power of the movement. She also was a witness to the shootings at Kent State on May 4, 1970, when National Guard troops fired into a group of students who were protesting the war in Vietnam. These experiences and more have shaped their politics and their music.

“Give Light” expresses the fundamentally democratic (with a small “d”) vision of the civil rights movement and the peace, feminist, and environmental movements, each of which was deeply influenced by early leaders who came of age in civil rights circles.

(34) I Am Willing (Holly Near, 2003)

“I Am Willing” is a powerful hymn of hope, tradition, and commitment.

It was written by Holly Near (born 1949), who has been singing about love and justice since she was a member of the original Broadway cast of the musical “Hair.” After the Kent State shootings in 1970, the entire cast staged a silent vigil in protest. In 1971 Near joined the Free The Army Tour, an anti-Vietnam War road show of music, comedy, and plays organized by Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, and antiwar activist Fred Gardner. A year later she was one of the first women to create an independent record company, Redwood Records, whose mission was to promote and produce music by politically conscious artists from around the world. Near has given her life to singing music as a globally conscious feminist, building coalitions and forging links between international feminism, anti-war activism, and the movement for LGBTQ self-determination.

“I Am Willing” captures Near’s warm and capacious vision, which elsewhere she explained:

“I do not separate my music from my heart nor do I separate my ideas from my daily life. I open myself up to learning as much as I can about humanity and this mysterious life experience, but I do not relate to political work as a series of ‘causes.’ Moment by moment, I integrate what I learn into my personal life, personalizing my politics. It is from this personal place that I write my songs.”

(35) Answering the Call – Jason Shelton (2004)

“Answering the Call” was written by UU Rev. Jason Shelton to honor Rev. William (Bill) Sinkford, who at that time was the first African American president of our Unitarian Universalist Association, for his prophetic witness in being one of the leading UU voices for marriage equality. The song has become an anthem for many UUs who are engaged in social justice work.

The original title was “Standing on the Side of Love.” After a variety of discussions about how that phrase perpetuates ablism, Shelton changed the title to “Answering the Call.” He finds this new metaphor, he says, “more theologically useful and accurate.” Similarly, the UU social justice network formerly known as “Standing on the Side of Love” is now simply known as “Side with Love!”

Jason Shelton makes these suggestions for singing “Answering the Call” with a congregation or other group:

“The song has a lilting pop style, and singers and congregations should take care not to sing it too heavily. A lighter, more relaxed sound will make the rhythms clearer and more easily sung. I generally have a soloist sing the verses, invite the congregation to sing the chorus, and use a choir for the background parts (available in a separately published choral octavo from Yelton Rhodes Music). The use of a full rhythm section (piano, bass, and drum set) is most effective and highly recommended.”

See also Shelton’s musical biography and mission statement, which accompany song #21, “Life Calls Us On.”

(36) One World (Vincent B. Silliman and Kenneth H. Seitz, 1955 and 2012)

The words to “One World” were written by Vincent Silliman (1894-1979), a Unitarian minister and worship arts specialist who composed an abundance of poems, hymns, responsive readings, speaking choruses, children’s festival scripts, readings for modern weddings, and other materials to support liberal religious worship. In 1923 he helped found the Religious Art Guild, which for more than fifty years created worship materials for liberal religious congregations. His work helped change the role and tone of music in Unitarian Universalist and Ethical Culture congregations.

Ken Seitz is a conductor and composer who served as First Parish’s music director from 1984 to 2002 and is now our Music Director Emeritus. He has contributed numerous musical arrangements and original choral compositions to the musical life of our congregation.

In 2012 Ken composed an original choral setting of Silliman’s text, “One World.” That setting has now been reformatted for congregational use in our new First Parish songbook.

(37) Room at the Table (Carrie Newcomer, 2014)

Carrie Newcomer is an American singer, songwriter, and author who emphasizes spiritual themes. In 2009 and 2011 she traveled to India as a cultural ambassador, including musical performances organized by the U.S. State Department. In 2012 she made a similar trip to Kenya on behalf of the Interfaith Hunger Initiative. These experiences – as well as her collaborations with various authors, academics, philosophers and musicians – have shaped her music. “Room at the Table” was recorded on her 2014 album, “A Permeable Life.”

(38) Prayer Chant (We Resist) (Mark A. Miller, 2017)

Mark Miller dedicated his “Prayer Chant (We Resist)” to the Drew University Ubuntu Pan-African Choir. He sang it with the First Parish congregation during a worship service in April 2018. The congregation’s response was so positive that we asked Miller’s permission to include it in this songbook.

Miller is an African American composer and conductor, a lifelong United Methodist, and the grandson, son, brother, uncle, and cousin of United Methodist clergy. Since 1999 Miller has led music for United Methodists and others around the country, and he has been deeply involved in what he considers Christ’s mission of breaking down the dividing walls of hostility and fear in the United Methodist Church. He is an Assistant Professor of Church Music at Drew Theological School and a Lecturer in the Practice of Sacred Music at Yale University, as well as the Minister of Music at Christ Church in Summit, New Jersey. He has also been a teacher and mentor to First Parish’s Music Director, Jonathan Brennand.

Miller believes passionately that music can change the world. He also believes in Cornell West’s maxim that “Justice is what love looks like in public.” His dream is that the music he composes, performs, teaches, and leads will inspire and empower people to create the beloved community.

How, he asks, can music reach across time and space and social location to form communities who sing with unity and joy? How can we sing not only songs of thanksgiving, but also songs about justice-making and reconciliation?