Happy New Year!

As we begin 2018, let me explain just a little about this blog and it’s purpose. As the Director of Music at Mt Chestnut Presbyterian, I select a majority of the music used during worship. Praise songs, hymns, choir anthems and other liturgical music (such as the congregational prayer at the end of the service) are selected by me. In the process of choosing, I take into account various factors. What is the Scripture lesson for this week? What is the title and/or theme of Pastor Ron’s message? What kind of atmosphere should the music create in relation to the topic? But the most important question I ask is “Lord, which music will glorify You and fulfill Your purpose this week?”

It is the answer to that particular question which is forefront on my mind as I choose music for the service. Several years ago Jeff approached me and said “I think we need to do this hymn on Sunday, but I don’t know why. It doesn’t really fit with my topic, but I feel God leading to that hymn.” I responded “Don’t concern yourself with that, if that’s what the Lord wants, that is the one we will sing.” And Jeff was correct. It didn’t really have a whole lot to do with his message, but several people came to us after worship and said, “That hymn really moved me today.” Or “I’m not sure what happened but it seemed like I sang that hymn for the first time and noticed new truths I had not seen in it before.” That’s God at work. Sometimes the reason for the song is clear and sometimes the reason is because God said “Sing this.”

The purpose of this blog will be to explore a piece of music from the previous week’s service. It might be a hymn or praise song, choir anthem, offertory, or even a prelude selections. On the last Sunday of 2017 a group of men sang “An Old Irish Blessing”- an excellent way to end one year as the words say “And until we meet again, may God hold you in His hand.”

Looking back on 2017, there were many ups and downs for us as individuals and for us as a congregation. But the simple truth remains – God holds me/you/us in the palm of His hand. His great desire is to be in relationship with us. He wants to allow the sun to warm our face and the road be easy to travel. However, sin corrupts that notion. We struggle, distracted by other people or our jobs or our hobbies, even our own wants and desires can distract us from Him. Remember that no matter what we’ve done, no matter how many times we have disobeyed Him, if we seek Him with our whole heart we will find Him. (Jeremiah 29:13-14)

As we enter 2018 my prayer for you as an individual and as a congregation is this:

*May the road rise to meet you,*

*May the wind be always at your back*

*May the sun shine warm upon your face*

*May the rain fall soft upon you fields*

*And until we meet again*

*May God hold you in His hand*

*May God hold you, in the palm of His hand*

Blessings!

Mike