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## *This Is My Song*

An article from the *Cathedral Times*

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I have been humming a most haunting hymn. Last week, I heard it sung anew by six young men in an a capella group called "The Bible Belters" (they are all students at Yale Divinity School). I have heard the hymn before, and I have even sung it. But, somehow, when I heard these guys sing it in such tune, in simple and stirring six-part harmony, the song has stayed with me.

*This is my song, Oh God of all the nations,  
A song of peace for lands afar and mine.  
This is my home, the country where my heart is;  
Here are my hopes, my dreams, my sacred shrine.  
But other hearts in other lands are beating,  
With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine.*

*My country's skies are bluer than the ocean,  
And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine.  
But other lands have sunlight too and clover,  
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.  
Oh hear my song, oh God of all the nations,  
A song of peace for their land and for mine.*

The words were written by Lloyd Stone in 1934, between the two world wars and meant to be sung to the tune "Finlandia," by Jean Sibelius. (Read the words again, and try to hum them!) The hymn is not printed in our Episcopal hymnal (we cannot print everything), but The New Century Hymnal uses it at #591. There, the editors note that the hymn can be associated with Psalm 82:8:

"Arise, O God, and rule the earth,

For you shall take all nations for your own."

All of us have favorite songs from time to time. Mine have ranged from "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" (I will always sing that!) to "Let It Be," to "At the Name of Jesus." But this week, my favorite is Lloyd Stone's simple poetry, in the song above.

What if we could all sing with such double intention: pride and thanks for our own country combined with appreciation and honor that "other hearts in other lands are beating with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine?"

The poet here captures nicely a harmonic tension that rings through modern civilizations: the tension between the local and the global. All of us have local attachments. They are where we learn and love. We honor the sacred shrines there. But each of us, one day, begins to realize that we need global and worldwide relationships, too. God, and God's world, is always larger than we thought!

It is the song of the Anglican tradition to honor both the local and the global. The Christianity that developed in England, long before the Reformation, was one that was rather loosely connected to Rome, one that surely honored the Catholic tradition, but which also developed deep roots in the local culture. That is why Anglicanism, after the Reformation, ended up looking a lot like Roman Catholicism even though it participated fully in Protestant reforms.

The tension between local and global will always be with those of us in the Anglican tradition of Christianity. That tension is the source of some of the disharmony we experience now in our church; local and global threaten to separate from one another. But I believe this tension can be resolved, like the harmony in any great song resolves itself. Sometimes, two notes sounding together in a song strikes us as discordant; but, later, what sounds unusual is exactly what gives our song its identity. We have a beautiful and distinctive harmony in the Anglican tradition, and I am glad to sing it widely!

Sam Candler signature



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