

More About COME UNTO ME

In the mid '90s, when I was the choir director at Trinity UMC in Albuquerque, I had a close friend and musical colleague named Vince Dussair. Vince, a retired music educator who was very active in the church, had a flair for composition and liked to set quotations of Jesus to be sung at services. He always began his settings with the short introduction "...and Jesus said..."

While Vince enjoyed the creative work of setting the texts, he had little interest in the nitty-gritty sweat work of preparing performable arrangements. So he always wrote his music in lead sheet format (just words and tune with chord symbols indicating harmony) , then hired someone in Kansas City to write the accompaniment and, if it was a choral piece, fill out the parts. These arrangements, while never inspired, were usually adequate. But when Vince showed me his beautiful setting for solo voice of this well-loved text from St. Matthew in 1995, I thought that it was way too good for the hack accompaniment that his hired arranger had given it, and I immediately asked if I could write a new SATB arrangement of it for the Trinity Choir. He readily agreed, so I quickly wrote my arrangement and passed it out to the choir.

As soon as I started rehearsing **Come Unto Me** with them, someone pointed out the similarity between my introduction/accompaniment figure and the one in J.S. Bach's **Sheep May Safely Graze**. I hadn't noticed that, but OK, there is a little coincidental inverted similarity there. I certainly wasn't thinking about the Bach piece when I wrote it, but since both texts deal with the theme of comfort and shelter, a little thematic kinship in the music is actually quite appropriate. I didn't think old Sebastian would mind if I kept it, especially since he was a prolific borrower himself.

Vince passed away in 2005 at the age of 93, and by the time I started self-publishing my choral music under the Dacker imprint in 2012, his wife Margaret was also gone. So I didn't know where to go for permission to publish my arrangement of his setting. Eventually, I tracked down his heirs and they very graciously gave me permission to publish this choral anthem. Thank you, Kent and Diane!