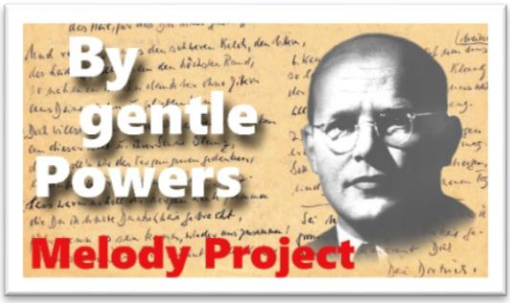
A song goes around the world

80 years – Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “By gentle (gracious) Powers”

A journey of discovery with probably the most popular hymn of our time

In December 1944, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote his most famous poem as a Christmas greeting to his fiancée and family. The anniversary is a good opportunity to bring the author's message and his fate to the attention of the public in a completely new way through the text and its many musical settings. Here are some suggestions:

Melody project for “By gentle Powers” on YouTube



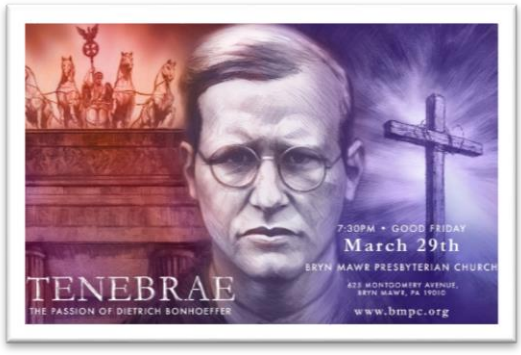
A good basis for this is the “Melodies Project” on YouTube with its wide range of serious melodies of this hymn and its large offer of background information like movies, interviews and articles.

You can get to know the scores and sing along using “sounding sheet music” and presentations with full text (in English, German and other languages):

International: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4G_TfKePYgLUkq5_0YjJkDTBCTeFgZNF
German: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4G_TfKePYgI6gX5qRIAuH5mINzqMqqBM

An interactive directory is attached here. This can be shared, integrated into a website or made available for download.

TENEBRAE – The Passion of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hugh McElyea



“TENEBRAE – The Passion of Dietrich Bonhoeffer” offers a good transition into the anniversary year 2025. In twelve impressive scenes, the important stages of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life are presented in songs and selected texts and linked to the Passion of Jesus.

The model is a liturgical Passion service from the monastic tradition of the 4th century, in which 12 candles are extinguished one after the other. The expressive video of the premiere in 2018 is publicly available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE69Pp0onnA&t=97s

Have a look to the “Tenebrae” homepage too for further information: https://www.tenebraelive.com

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's testimony is as relevant today as it was then - a warning not to look away in the turmoil of this time, but to be committed to God's standards so that history does not repeat itself.

An information sheet with explanations from the composer on the creation of TENEBRAE is attached here. He shares his thoughts also here: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_lSGc8_0_0*

Hugh McElyea provides interested churches, schools and choirs with the script and score free of charge for organizing their own performance. The documents can be requested as a PDF by email from the composer personally: *hugomac6715@gmail.com*

International concert project "Dietrich B.", Ensemble Nobiles (in Germany)

A particular highlight of the commemorative events in the anniversary year is certainly the international concert project "Dietrich B." by the Ensemble Nobiles from Leipzig. Contributions from several composers from different countries are woven into a special mass.

In addition to guest performances by the ensemble in Australia and Great Britain, concerts with the Gewandhauschoir will take place in several German cities, for example on March 29th in Weimar, Herderkirche, and on April 6th in Weiden, St. Michael. The final festival from May 8th to 11th in Leipzig promises an exciting and informative weekend. Information can be found here: *https://www.ensemblenobiles.de/dietrichb*

Oratorio "Words called into the night" by Kurt Grahl

The oratorio "Worte, in die Nacht gerufen" by Kurt Grahl (with texts by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Claus-Peter März) has now been published by Ebert-Musikverlag in Leipzig and is "waiting" to be performed by committed choirs.

Kurt Grahl is not only the composer of the musical setting of "Von guten Mächten" as found in the Catholic hymn book, he has also created other committed compositions on the subject of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The "script" of his oratorio with the texts and a lot of background information is available as a video on YouTube and offers an initial overview (in German): *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6wjV_F1zzk*

Receive blessings – pass on blessings

I wish with all my heart that the song "Von guten Mächten – By gentle Powers" in its various musical settings will be as much of a blessing to others as I have experienced again and again through its lyrics and in the many personal encounters of the last few months.

In any case, in this anniversary year, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's message could touch people in a completely new way, a message that is perhaps more important in these challenging times than ever before in the past decades - but who am I telling?

God bless you every new day!

Eckhard Becker

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