

CAPITAL UNIVERSITY CHORAL SERIES

CRAIG COURTNEY LYNDY HASSELER

EDITORS

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

SSAA

LYRICS BY HOWARD THURMAN

MUSIC BY DAN FORREST

From the Composer

I first encountered this Howard Thurman text online in January 2014, after the Christmas season had ended. Its beautiful lines call us not to merely take in the sights and sounds of the Christmas celebration, but to respond by doing our part in working toward the “peace on earth” that we so often sing about. I never set a text to music unless it “sings to me”—that is, it suggests some musical setting to me in which its external and internal beauty might be heightened by being joined to music. For me, some texts are best left alone as poetry; others eventually “sing to me”, but only after the song is coaxed out of them. Once in a while, though, a text seems to sing right off the page, and this poem did just that. I strove for a simple but elegant *a cappella* setting that would breathe with the flow of the words and let its beauty shine through. The piece may be effectively programmed in a variety of settings, either in the middle of a service or concert, or as a closing benediction. It is also effective either during the Christmas season or after it. — Dan Forrest

Original SATB version dedicated to Dr. James C. Howell by his church family for 11 years of ministry
as Senior Pastor of Myers Park United Methodist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Work of Christmas

For SSAA Choir with Piano *

Howard Thurman (1899-1981)

DAN FORREST
(ASCAP)

Slowly, simply, with great freedom ♩ = ca. 76-80

Sopranos

Oh (or Mm)

Alto

Oh (or Mm)

When the song of the an-gels is

Slowly, simply, with great freedom ♩ = ca. 76-80

1 2 3 4 5 6

(begin at m. 3 if piano is not used)

simile/harmonically

Oh (or Mm)

stilled, When the star in the sky is gone,

Oh (or Mm)

7 8 9 10 11

* Also available for SATB Choir (CU1029) and SSAA Choir (CU1052).

** 2nd Sopranos may join Alto 1's on melody, mm. 4 - 12.

When feasible, this piece may be sung "in the round," with choir surrounding the congregation/audience.

Text used by permission of Friends United Press: Thurman, Howard. "The Work of Christmas,"
from *A Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations*. Friends United Press (www.fum.org/shop), 1985.

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CU1052-3

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kings and

unis.

When the kings and prin - ces are home, When the

kings and

12 13 14 15 16

poco rit.

shep - herds are back with their flock, The work of

poco rit.

unis. *pp* *slowly*

unis. *pp* *slowly*

poco rit.

pp *slowly*

17 18 19 20 21

Poco piu mosso

Christ - mas be gins: To find the lost, To

unis.

unis.

Poco piu mosso

mf

22 23 24 25 26

heal the bro - ken, To feed the hun - gry, To re - lease the

27 28 29 30 31

unis.

pris - 'ner, To re - build the na - tions; To bring

32 33 34 35 36

f *sub. mp slower*

peace a - mong bro - thers, To make mu - sic,

37 38 39 40 41

rit. *unis.* *mf mu div.* *mf*

make mu - sic, *f*
 sic, make mu sic, make mu

sic, mu sic, *f*

42 43 44 45 46

molto rit. *mp* *slower* *unis.* Like the beginning
 sic from the heart.

molto rit. *mp* *slower* Like the beginning
mp *p*

47 48 49 50 51 52

p (2nd sopranos may join Alto 1's on melody, mm. 55-63)
 Oh (or Mm) When the song of the an - gels is stilled, *p*
p Oh (or Mm) Oh (or Mm)

53 54 55 56 57 58

Oh (or Mm)

kings and

When the star in the sky is gone, When the kings and

kings and

59 60 61 62 63 64

prin - ces are home, When the shep - herds are back with their

unis. poco rit.

unis. poco rit.

65 66 67 68 69

flock, The work of Christ - mas be - gins.

pp rit.

p rit. pp

(Top note may be sung by a soloist)

70 71 72 73 74 75 76