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## Draw the circle wide miller lyrics

By the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Kay Thompson Common Cup Singers. Gordon Light is front row, right. Draw the Circle Wide by Gordon Light; Arr. Mark A. MillerWorship & Song, 3154"Draw the circle wide, draw the circle wide. No one stands alone, we'll stand side by side," sang the then new Iowa Resident Bishop Laurie Haller as she finished her remarks. For many of us, this was our first introduction to the conference's new episcopal leader. As she invited us to join in singing, I was reminded of the call we share as followers of Jesus Christ.



Mark A. MillerWorship & Song, 3154"Draw the circle wide, draw the circle wide. No one stands alone, we'll stand side by side," sang the then new Iowa Resident Bishop Laurie Haller as she finished her remarks. For many of us, this was our first introduction to the conference's new episcopal leader. As she invited us to join in singing, I was reminded of the call we share as followers of Jesus Christ. Gordon Light (b. 1944) wrote the original words and music (1994) to "Draw the Circle Wide." Light is one of the members of the Common Cup Company ministry. (See The Common Cup Company's website at [commoncup.com](http://commoncup.com). Sheet music is available on the company's website). The music ministry of The Common Cup Company began in 1979, when Gordon Light, an Anglican priest and later bishop, met United Church ministers Ian Macdonald and Jim Ulrich while they were all serving in Winnipeg, Canada. Bob Wallace joined the group in 1982. A singer, songwriter, and guitarist educated at Carleton University and Toronto's Trinity College, Gordon Light describes The Common Cup Company's distinct genre as a gentle, contemplative brand of Christian folk music. He says, "(our) music reflects a range of concerns including peace, justice and refugee issues, personal faith and spirituality, music for the liturgical seasons, as well as songs about the stages of our life, from birth to death" (Langmaid, Anglican Journal). Wilfred Langmaid, writing in the Anglican Journal, notes that "the call to action has marked many of the efforts of the band through the years," including raising money for the Canadian Council of Churches' court challenge on refugee legislation. They also toured to raise money for the Dr. Jesse Saulteaux Centre, a United Church theological college for indigenous people. Gordon Light's original text, originally with a refrain and three stanzas, is also known as "God the still-point of the circle." The hymn is found in the hymnals Common Praise (1998) and More Voices (2007). Canadian church musician and composer, Andrew Donaldson, describes the song's inspiration: The first stanza names God as the "still-point" of the circle—around whom creation turns. "Still point" was a term used by William Garner Sutherland, DO, and founder of Cranial Osteopathy, to describe the brief pauses in rhythm of the cerebrospinal fluid during osteopathic manipulation. From the sixth century BC comes the idea of the still point as a place of calm and balance: "the soft overcomes the hard; the gentle overcomes the rigid" (Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching). Mystics believe that there exists at the center of all life a silent, transcendent still point. It is the basis of all peace, love, wisdom, and joy. T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) continued the idea in a line from "Burnt Norton" from the first of his Four Quartets: "at the still point of the turning world." (See . The second stanza speaks of loving hearts that faithfully encompass or form a circle about, great and small. And it is a circle that touches far horizons and knows no borders, bringing to mind Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (CEB). The last stanza speaks of the dream of Christ in us that opens every door. And Christ's dream is larger and more than we could ever dream, for God "is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20, CEB). Using the refrain's text, Mark A. Miller (b. 1967) composed new music that was published in Worship and Song (2011) for congregational singing and for SATB choirs. Miller believes music can change the world, and his dream is that the music he composes, performs, teaches, and leads will inspire and empower people to create the beloved community ( . His choral literature has been published by Choristers Guild and Abingdon Press, and his hymns are included in Worship & Song, Sing! Prayer and Praise (2009), Zion Still Sings (2007), Amazing Abundance (2003), The Faith We Sing (2001), and others. A more recent publication, Roll Down, Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice ( [Choristers Guild, 2015] speaks to Miller's belief in Cornell West's quote: "Justice is what love looks like in public" (cited on .The words of the refrain, "draw the circle wide," bring to mind that in a circle, all points are the same distance from the center. When in the circle, all are visible to one another - "No one stands alone. We'll stand side by side." The refrain also reminds us that a circle is drawn when the outside points revolve around the center point—rather than vice versa. A similar idea was expressed by Edwin Markham (1852-1940) in his famous poem "Outwitted," when he began: "He drew a circle that shut me out" and concludes, "We drew a circle and took him in" ( . This song has become a call for unity during days of controversy and division. We must be continually reminded that the beloved community must be nurtured. For God's love made known in Jesus Christ continues to work through the Holy Spirit to open our doors, our hearts, and our minds so that the circle of community is drawn wider still.For Further ReadingAndrew Donaldson "Draw the Circle Wide." The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology. Canterbury Press, (accessed December 18, 2020). Hillary Doerries "Mark Miller," The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology. Canterbury Press, (accessed December 16, 2020). T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," Best Poems, Encyclopedia, Wilfred Langmaid, "Christian Folk Music with a Contemporary Flair" in Anglican Journal (December 1, 1999) [accessed December 16, 2020]. Still Point, Osteomyology Care, (accessed December 16, 2020).About this week's guest writer:Jacqueline Thompson is an ordained elder in the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church currently serving as lead pastor to the Clear Lake United Methodist Church. In addition to earning the Master of Divinity degree from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, she earned her bachelor of music degree (theory, piano) from the University of Dayton in Ohio and both the master of music (theory) and the doctor of musical arts (music education) degrees from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance. Thompson is actively involved in the Iowa Choral Directors Association, Handbells Musicians of America, Two Rivers Story Spinners, and Iowa High School Music Association. She has been a member of The Fellowship since 2007.Bible verses marked CEB are from the Common English Bible. Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.