



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2025

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Hillsdale College Chapel Choir Presents Passiontide Sacred Service

The choir performed 'The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to St. John.'

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College hosted a Passiontide sacred service on Sunday, April 13, in Christ Chapel. The Hillsdale College Chapel Choir performed “The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to St. John” by Henrich Schütz to mark Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week. Students, faculty, staff, and community members attended.

The “St. John Passion” is Schütz’s setting of chapters 18-19 of John’s Gospel account of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. Written for the royal court of Dresden in the 1660s, the “St. John Passion” was among the first to invest the choral settings of the “crowd” with dramatic realism.

“For early Christians, singing the Scriptures slowed down and amplified the words, allowing the listeners to understand them, but the sermons that interpreted the Scriptures were still spoken, not sung,” said Timothy McDonnell, director of sacred music. “In the ‘St. John Passion,’ Schütz brings the dramatic vividness of Baroque style to his settings of the crowd choruses, capturing subtle shades of meaning to give the listener a kind of interpretive key to John’s account of Christ’s passion.”

The original was composed in German, but McDonnell translated it into English for the service.

“Schütz set the crowd acclamations, like ‘crucify him,’ for chorus sung by the choir, while the narration and statements from individuals in the story like Pilate, Peter, and Jesus himself, were set in German recitative sung by soloists,” McDonnell said. “I replaced the original German recitative of the narrative with the New King James Version of the Bible, and I composed new music for parts of the narrative where the adaptation to English was just too awkward.”

In addition to the “St. John Passion,” the Chapel Choir also performed music from Bach’s cantata BWV 12, “Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen,” and Mendelssohn’s “Jesu, meine Freude.” The service also included readings and hymns meditating on the final, pivotal events of Christ’s life.

For photos from previous music events in Christ Chapel, click [here](#). For photos of Christ Chapel, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 6.7 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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