

Creating & Curating the hymns that form us

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“The current times call for new hymnody which is gentle, compassionate, challenging, and prophetic.”

+ Steven Croft

Comforting the disturbed and disturbing the comfortable?

May this place be one of nurture
where we all may come to know
how your endless love sustains us
as we live and move and grow.
May we work to build your kingdom
full of truth and light and grace,
living life in all its fullness
held in one divine embrace.

From our negligence and failures
you have called us to repent,
drawing energy for action
from the voices of lament.
As the secret hurts long hidden
may at last be brought to light,
may the truth unlock the freedom
that is every person's right.

For you hold the broken-hearted
till they learn to live again,
and your justice stands like mountains,
while your mercy falls like rain
when the smallest child is valued,
and the strong empower the weak,
when each human life is hallowed
and the unheard voices speak:

So with humble thanks we praise you
and we lift to you in prayer
all the people you are calling
to this ministry of care.
Give us wisdom, grace and courage,
holding fast to all that's good,
seeing Christ in one another
we will love and serve our Lord.

Tune: Corvedale

O God of all salvation
In every troubled hour,
Look down at your creation
With pity and with power.
In all the pain we're seeing,
For stranger as for friend,
We'll cling with all our being
To love that cannot end.

O God, your loving passion
Is deeper than our pain,
Look down, and in compassion
Bring us to life again.
When we are found despairing,
When all seems lost to sin,
We'll hear your voice declaring
That love alone will win.

O God, when hate grows stronger,
With fear to pave its way,
The cry, 'Lord, how much longer?'
With broken hearts we pray.
In all that is dismaying
In humankind's freewill,
We'll join our voices, praying
That love will triumph still.

O God, whose love will never
Be silenced, stalled or stilled,
Set us to work wherever
There're bridges to rebuild.
We'll take our life's vocation
To make, like heav'n above,
In this and every nation
A kingdom built on love.

What makes a hymn gentle
& compassionate?

What makes a hymn
challenging & prophetic?

O God of earth and altar,
bow down and hear our cry,
our earthly rulers falter,
our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us,
the swords of scorn divide,
take not thy thunder from us,
but take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches,
from lies of tongue and pen,
from all the easy speeches
that comfort cruel men,
from sale and profanation
of honour and the sword,
from sleep and from damnation,
deliver us, good Lord!

Tie in a living tether
the prince and priest and thrall,
bind all our lives together,
smite us and save us all;
in ire and exultation
aflame with faith, and free,
lift up a living nation,
a single sword to thee.

Words: G K Chesterton (1906)

Music: King's Lynn (RVW)

If this is a 'hymn for the nation', would you sing it to help you preach about what's happening with all the flags?

What is it like to sing about uncomfortable topics?

What can be sung, communally, and by whom? What *can't*?

How do we sing together about divisive issues and themes?

How do you choose hymns to respond to different stages of a crisis and its aftermath, as in the stages of grief?

What hymns help us to come before God as a community, nation, or world, with both honesty and hope?

In today's world, do we need new comforting/challenging hymns?

How are new hymns written?

How do we make them both familiar and fresh?

The 'patina' of words and tunes'

Standing on the shoulders of giants

Playful / respectful

Critique

Familiarity

What words or phrases in scripture and liturgy or in contemporary cultural text would you like to find in a hymn?

'Familiarity can be double edged, both opening and closing the doors of meaning.' (TDS)

Freely to give, and freely share

All that we have, and all we are,
A pledge to cherish and embrace,
Made through this covenant of grace.
With soul and body intertwined,
two lives together, heart and mind,
in deeper union day by day,
will walk in step along life's way.

Kindle a flame both bright and bold,
Out of the earth bring purest gold,
Turn all our water into wine,
Teach us new songs of love divine!
Give us your patience, make us kind,
Increase our faith that we may find
that in true love, good Lord, we pray,
we'll walk together all life's way.

Jerusalem

Other hymns:

Drop, slow tears of anguish,
sing of love unknown;
watch as in the garden
Jesus weeps alone...
When the world feels broken,
trapped behind a stone,
raise us up, and teach us
songs of love made known.

Now ascended to his glory,
Priest for ever, God's own Son,
still with love he guards and guides us,
leading us where he is gone.

Through each passing generation
Still our hope in God is founded.

Scripture and liturgy:

Our hope renewed by sacrament and word,
we go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Dark is the night; not all are blessed with sleep.
Some wake and work,
and some must watch and weep:

Ev - ry-one here has a part to play as we love and serve the Lord to - day.
Come to Je - sus, fol - low in his way, in all we do and think and say.
We are mem - bers all one bo - dy, build - ing God's com - mu - ni - ty!

You came to raise the last and least, to set the longheld cap-tive free, to
feed the hung-ry with a feast, and give the poor their dig - ni - ty. You
let the si-lenced voi-ces speak, and helped the low - ly sing their song, em-
braced the out-cast, blessed the meek, re-vealed a world where all be - long.

What resonances
from scripture and
liturgy stand out?

What difference
does a tune make?

You brought the news of kingdom come,
a feast where all are found and fed,
where no-one needs the fallen crumb,
for all will share the living bread:
a kingdom where division ends,
where first and last can sit and eat:
when all are one, you call us friends,
your work of love at last complete.

You showed your strength in stooping low
and humbly washing dusty feet,
forsaking heav'n for earth, to show
how power can choose to leave its seat.
Teach us this same humility,
renew our hearts that we might learn
how we can set each other free
from tables you would overturn

Curating hymns ‘from farm to plate’

What we sing about: themes, content, genre?

Attitude: lament, praise, supplication?

What language we use: about God, people, the world

Who gets to say it: authorship, perspective, diversity

Think about each stage in the process of getting a hymn into a service at your church. What (and who) shaped that process at every stage?

How do hymns form us?

Prosody

Form supports content: words are powerful

Embodiment

Hymn singing prompts holistic engagement

Neurochemistry

Communal singing and hormones

Curation builds trust

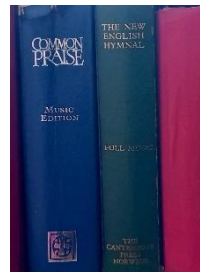
What guarantees quality?

The test of time

What is the relationship between quality, truthfulness, and durability?

“With great power comes great responsibility”

**“Grant that what we sing with our lips
we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts
we may show forth in our lives...”**



**“All this is true
because
it rhymes”**

Lego Movie

A Hymn for Easter Eve 2020

Dark is the night, the passing hours are long,
Lone voices whisper sorrow's silent song,
Each faltering prayer will fear it's made in vain,
When will we sing the world to life again?

Dark is the night; not all are blessed with sleep.
Some wake and work, and some must watch and weep:
Angels disguised, they tend a world in pain,
Offering the hope that there'll be life again.

Dark is the night, the silent hours are slow,
Heav'n's tears anoint the suffering earth below,
Blessing with dew the secret springing grain,
Pledge that the world will soon know life again.



Why is this good news?

Hymns are a powerful thing!

They tend to sound true, and tend to take root in our lives, so we can use them genuinely to make the worship and life of the church both more prophetic and more compassionate.

They are a rare chance, in modern life, to sing together with others.

Using hymns

Preaching and praying

Connect liturgy, scripture and life

Teaching the faith – condensed theology

Bring difficult things into worship

Engage with lament and praise

Call to action

Space for your own notes

a pdf with clickable links
can be downloaded
using the QR code



Notes and resources

- Timothy Dudley Smith, *A Functional Art: Reflections of a Hymn Writer*, OUP 2017
- Jeremy Clines, [*Earthing common worship: an ecotheological critique of the Common Worship texts of the Church of England*](#) (Doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011)
- [Introducing the Revised English Hymnal](#) (Hymns Ancient and Modern YouTube channel, 2019)
- [Song and Hymn Writers Foundation](#)
- Kate Keefe: *A hymn for our times: O God of earth and altar*, 2020
- Daniel Johnson, [Rowan Williams wants to ditch 'bland' hymns. Do we need to rediscover the 'great classics'?](#) Premier Christianity Magazine, 8 May 2024
- Jason R Keefer et al, [The neurochemistry and social flow of singing: bonding and oxytocin](#), Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 23 September 2015