

We love our hymns!

Are hymns important to you? Do you love to hear a favourite hymn or song that has a special meaning for you? Well, you're not alone. Not long ago at a home group meeting we started talking about hymns – not just any old hymns, but the ones we know and love. Hymns truly help us worship God.

The bank of great Christian music that written in the past 2000 years is amazing. We don't have copies of the earliest music but some of the words have been preserved. The early Christian church inherited a long Jewish tradition of singing songs of worship, praise and adoration that is reflected in the Psalm or songs of David. St Justin (150 AD) referred to an early hymn based on the creation story: "O Gladsome Light of the holy glory, of the Immortal Father."

There have been times of great change in church music we use in church. In the 16th century Martin Luther wrote hymns such as "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." During Luther's time, some of the hymns compiled used tunes from songs sung in bars as people drank their beer. Today, these are called "classical hymns."

Composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was deeply influenced by the theology of Luther. Bach, a devout Christian, was for many years a church musician who

composed music to the glory of God.

Bach's contemporary, George Handel (1686 – 1759), wrote The Messiah while isolated in his room for three weeks. He wept at the glory of God's majesty; his music is so majestic that King George stood to hear it. This is said to have begun the tradition that we stand for the "Hallelujah Chorus." Bach and Handel were not only masters of music, but believers who reflected the worldview of the 17th century: God is the Creator and deserves our worship. Good hymns connect our daily lives and contemporary issues with our understanding of God. They teach, challenge draw us closer, or give us a greater vision of God and his love for us.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) changed the face of church music and worship. Less than a year old, Isaac was often taken by his mother to God's House Tower, Southampton, where they would visit his father through the prison bars. Isaac's father was in prison because of his belief that scripture alone should be our guide to life and worship. The impact of his father's faith made a deep impression on the mind of his brilliant young son.

As a teenager, Isaac complained bitterly to his father about the dreary Psalms sung in church – he

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said the tunes were tiresome and the words meaningless. His father encouraged him to see what he could do "to mend the matter." Isaac went to his room and wrote his first hymn. The next Sunday *Behold the Glories of the Lamb* was sung in the Congregational chapel attended by the Watts family. Isaac was about 19 years old at the time. There were to be many more hymns – almost 700 in all including *When I survey the wondrous cross, Jesus shall reign where'ere the Sun, and O God, our help in ages past*.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) is best known for writing about 9,000 hymns, including *Hark the herald angels sing; And can it be; Love Divine, all loves excelling; and Hail the day that sees him rise*.

The list of English hymn composers is daunting. Cowper, Newton, Monk, Parry, Hayden, Dykes, Vaughn Williams, Stainer, Holst ... in fact beginning a list is dangerous business because you are bound to leave out some writer dearly loved in hymnody.

There are many young composers of hymns that are introducing a new generation of hymns. Some of these pieces will become treasured church classics, others will fade into history in the same way that hymns throughout history have done.

One diocese lists the 25 most favourite hymns in the diocese, including:

Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind; How Great Thou Art; Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord; The Day Thou Gavest; Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven; In Christ Alone; I The Lord Of Sea And Sky (Here I am Lord); Love Divine; Christ Triumphant and Abide With Me.

Kings College Cambridge lists these compositions in its CD, "Best loved hymns." *All My Hope On God Is Founded; Praise, My Soul; The King Of Heaven; Morning Has Broken; Come Down, O Love Divine; A Mighty Fortress Is Our God; O What Their Joy And Their Glory Must Be; When I Survey The Wondrous Cross; Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind; Be Thou My Vision; The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended; Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence; Praise To The Lord, The Almighty, The King Of Creation; My Song Is Love Unknown; The Lord's My Shepherd; Thine Be The Glory; Drop, Drop, Slow Tears; Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken; and All People That On Earth Do Dwell.*

I'm on a quest to find which hymns speak to us as a church. Tell me the names of your 25 favourite hymns. If that seems too daunting, how about your favourite 10? To make it more interesting, once we've had a chance to put the list together we'll arrange a Sunday Evening Hymn Sing. Let's get searching and singing!

Howard

Walsingham Pilgrimage

This year's pilgrimage to Walsingham is due to take place from 22-26 September. Places are available, so why not contact Trudi Jones on Oxford 714670 or Betty Mitchell on Oxford 773620 for further details.

ROSANNE INTERVIEWS

Nick Chavasse

Month by month some of the most intriguing answers I get during my interviews are to the question, 'Has God been part of your life since childhood?' As my readers will know, all are very individual but this month the answer I got was surprising. Nick's commitment to God developed as a result of homesickness. But more of that later.

'Who is this month's subject, who is Nick?' I hear you ask. Let me explain. He is the newest member of staff in the offices upstairs in St James Church Centre. He works with Chris Cole (whom you've already met) for FOR (the Fellowship of Reconciliation). He is a tall young man with red hair and a beard and lots of you will now recognise him. But *who* is he? What brought him to Cowley and what of the journey along the way?

He has an academic, military and ecclesiastical background.. St Peter's College in

Oxford was founded by one of his forebears. He had a great-grandfather who was Bishop of Liverpool, an uncle who is Bishop of Rochester, his father was an army colonel and his brother is a lieutenant surgeon in the navy.

By total contrast, Nick went into the tourist industry.

When he was born his father had retired from the army and took a post as a director of Alcan, the giant aluminium company. His mother is a talented painter and sculptor and managed to juggle her career with homemaking and bringing up her three boys: Stephen, Nick and Phil. The family set up home in Amersham where Nick went to school until he was eight years old. A move to

Worcester meant a change of school but on their return to Amersham he was offered a place at grammar school and set about enjoying his teenage years. His mother planned lessons for him on the French horn but he took

up the guitar which was 'cooler' and went down well at the Baptist Youth Club. He enjoyed the club with all its teaching and became baptised by total immersion. School days were happy despite describing himself as 'rubbish' at maths and only 'average' at science. History and English were his favourites and even twenty years later he speaks with enthusiasm about the poetry he studied for 'O' and 'A' levels. He was a keen rugby player but discovered once he'd entered Cardiff University that there were some very strong players in the club who could out-play him so he stuck to studying for his ancient history and English degree and playing his bass guitar.

After university he began his travels. Using the knowledge gained from his degree he began organising guided tours for students setting up his business from home, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Israel,

Hungary, Poland, South Africa, these are some of the countries he visited with his students.

With all that experience behind him he took a job in Exeter where for two years he was a promoter for the south-west area of the British Tourist Authority. They decided to send this bright young man to their office in Chicago. His brief was to 'market' Britain to the USA. During his five years with the Tourist Authority he heard about FOR in America. By now a fairly 'passionate atheist' (his own words) he began to get very angry with the way American society was being manipulated and coerced into the pro-war movement in Washington. It was about this time that Nick, feeling pretty homesick, found himself drawn into an Episcopal church with a remarkable pastor called Bonnie Perry. She had an important influence on his life so much so that he left his job in tourism and worked for two years in the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.

He speaks passionately and with rage at the way the American government turned people's minds against Iraq and says that, as a foreigner, he could see through it.

On the fourth anniversary of the declaration of war against Iraq a huge peaceful protest was mounted outside the White House. Nick went and was arrested along with many others. He was fined (a fine he had to pay or his work permit could have been withdrawn). However he feels that the whole experience was worth it as he came to realise that the peace movement in America encompasses all denominations, all ages and to his mind is the only way that any society can effect change.

We discussed the situations in China and Africa. He believes that the only way China will change is through its people. Africa is much more difficult. The fellowship of Reconciliation is poised to move into those troubled areas funded by our own government but their

hands are tied until dictators are deposed and opposition parties need help to establish civil stability.

Whilst in America with the Peace Fellowship Nick went to San Francisco where he took part in a study of non-violent resolution at Berkeley University. He there met Sandra. They fell in love and were married. After 9/11 (the attack on the World Trade Center) they both became distressed over the aggressive, war-like attitude being whipped up. They decided to come back to England.

A post was advertised in Cowley that suited Nick like a glove. He applied, was interviewed and now works among us. He and Sandra love Oxford. They arrived last year and to crown their happiness their first baby is due in September.

How would you describe yourself as a young child?

Bookish. I read Lord of the Rings four times when I was quite young. I was also quite shy but rebellious.

Have you any childhood memories you'd like to share?

I remember nearly sinking a boat in Norway!. We went on family sailing holidays quite a lot. One foggy, cold night we hit a rock in the fjord near Stavangar. By some miracle no damage was done.

Has God been part of your life since childhood?

No, not really. Although as an older teenager I got baptised God became important to me when I found All Saints Episcopal Church in Chicago.

If you could make a major change in the world what would it be?

Everyone in the world, no matter what religion or race, should believe that non-violence is our only future.

Is there anything in the

world that you find positive or encouraging?

I subscribe to Martin Luther King's idea which was that the road to peace is long but there is progression in the world towards the beloved community.

Do you have a treasured possession?

My bass guitar. I shall blow the dust off when the baby is born.

Do you have a hero or heroine, past or present?

Martin Luther King (his beyond Vietnam speech).

Ghandi – you have to be inspired by him. Henry David Thoreau who inspired God's non-violent movement.

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

I'm a big fan of cinema, especially world cinema, also the theatre. I enjoy a good

Shakespeare production. Always a good book – non-fiction at the moment – and music. I listen to Indie-rock and I also like Mozart, Debussy, Mahler and Vivaldi.

Are there any places in the world that you'd like to visit?

I'd like to go to India on a non-violence tour. I have cousins in Australia, near Melbourne, and Sandra has a brother in New Zealand (we did discuss the problem of long-haul travel with a small baby!)

Do you have plans for the future?

I'm at a bit of a crossroads because I want to stay working in the field of non-violence and peace (but in the longer term I'm looking to a master's (degree) in peace studies and conflict transformation.

Are you making the most of your green space?

Do you need help keeping your Garden tidy?

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Visit to Eastbourne

After an Easter cold and full of snow showers, what was a better tonic than four days in Eastbourne?

The weather improved on Tuesday as we set off from Oxford, sad to be leaving behind so many friends that were unable to be with us due to illness. We wish them all a speedy return to good health.

Our first stop was Chichester, a look around its wonderful cathedral and a chance to eat in the appetising refectory. A pleasant ride through West Sussex took us to our hotel in Eastbourne, The Lansdowne. A very comfortable and warm hotel where good food was enjoyed by all. No sign of the cold winds as we headed off to Beachy Head on Wednesday, spectacular views towards Eastbourne and the Seven Sisters. Our journey to Brighton took us through the pretty village of Alfriston. Many of us visited the Palace in Brighton, its audiotape system giving us excellent information on each room as we passed through. After an excellent meal we were entertained with singing and keyboard music, what an array of wigs and masks to match the singers of each song.

Thursday again was amazingly warm as we set off for Rye, driving through the historic town of Battle. On both of these days we were fortunate to have our courier Ronnie on the coach, who had so much information on all the places we visited. The highlight for me, and a few others, was our little choir

that we formed in the church at Rye. An organist plays on each Thursday and requests were met, see Dave for a rendition. Many of us climbed the tower to see excellent views over the coast and river. On to Hastings for a short stop before returning to our hotel. Fun followed our evening meal, with a beetle drive and yes, charades.

Friday morning was wet – the coach took us into Eastbourne before returning for lunch. Jim took about 30 of us up to Barling Gap, although a gale was blowing, the sea was spectacular, as were the white cliffs. A jigsaw was set up in one of the lounges when we returned, giving pleasure to quite a few of us. Later the jigsaw was raffled, raising £30 for the Jigsaw Appeal. Thanks to everyone and well done Cyril! After a meal it was quiz night, some bright people around!! It was soon Saturday morning, after looking around the art gallery in the hotel, we set off for Arundel before returning to Oxford.

Our next holiday will be at the Chine Hotel in Boscombe, Bournemouth on November 18th for three nights, followed by our Easter break to Newquay in Cornwall. If you are interested in either of these breaks and you haven't got your name down already, please ring us on 01425 280156. Our grateful thanks as always to Jim, our coach driver, and to Gordon who gives him so much help.

God bless you all, love from **Barbara and Brian.**

News from the April PCC meeting

As usual reports were received from the churches, the Deanery Synod, the Church Centre and the Treasurer.

Pat Chung on behalf of the Mothers' Union is arranging for a speaker from PACT (Parents and Children Together) to visit the Parish.

The Florence Park Centre have moved out of St Francis into their new premises. The Welsh choir have withdrawn their request to hold rehearsals there because we could not meet their expectations. The Food Bank is now operating in the church. The building is also used once a week as a Drop-In for the Slade and Headington Children's Centre, attracting families from the Wood Farm area.

Problems at the Church Centre with the boiler and the outside light have been resolved.

We are up to date with our payment of the Parish Share.

The Deanery Synod had met at All Saints' Church, Headington.

We looked forward to the arrival of a Team Vicar and discussed the procedure for his/her appointment.

Mr Peter Knott has been appointed cleaner at the Church Centre.

PCC members adopted the accounts and the budget proposals for the coming year. The Treasurer was warmly congratulated.

Howard is preparing a Parish Report including news of the groups that meet on church premises. He is planning a day in June for PCC members.

It is hoped that we can create a Parish office upstairs at the Church Centre when it is no longer needed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Keeping in touch

Do you remember a few months ago I asked if anyone knew of a friendly and capable hairdresser who would be pleased to 'look after' housebound people giving them a much needed lift with a nice 'hairdo'? Well, great news! I've found one! Her name is Mrs June Hills and she tells me she has space for three or four customers. Her telephone number is 01865 770289. If you are interested, do give her a ring. She will explain exactly what service she provides and how much she charges.

Rosanne Butler

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>) All Age Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am	Parish Eucharist <i>[Family Eucharist – 2nd Sunday of the month]</i>
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Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Group – <i>St Francis</i>
	2.30 pm	Parish Mothers' Union – <i>St James (3rd Mon)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Seashells – <i>Church Centre</i> —
	10.00 am	Toddler Service – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St James</i>
	12.30 pm	Tuesday Lunch Club – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Friends of <i>St Francis</i> – <i>St Francis (2nd & 4th)</i>
5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>	
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Tea Break – <i>St Francis (1st Wed)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>

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