

**All Saints Church, Boyne Hill Maidenhead
Sounds of Worship**

Easter 2

The Gospel reading for Easter 2 describes the first appearance of Jesus to his disciples when they gathered together on the evening of the resurrection. They subsequently tell Thomas, who was missing from the gathering, of their encounter with Jesus, but he wants to see Jesus himself rather than rely on their testimony. Jesus does indeed appear again in Thomas' presence. This is the point at which Thomas fully and irrevocably commits his life to spreading the gospel message. This story illustrates the challenge of what events in our own lives that precipitate our Christian commitment. How do we meet the living Jesus in a way that alters our life? Conversely, how do we reflect our faith to others to encourage and nurture their faith?

Two of the hymns chosen for Easter 2 explore the challenge of turning to Christ.

The first is "In Christ alone!" AM 678



Figure 1 "In Christ alone!" AM 678

1. In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.
2. In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save
till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
for every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.
3. There in the ground His body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and he is mine
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

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4. No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand
till He returns or calls me home
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

"In Christ Alone!" was the first of many collaborations between Stuart Townend and Keith Getty. Keith Getty is a professional musician who wrote music for commercial projects and cinema as well as church music. He was determined to write a melody that could work both in for a worship group band and organ/choir accompaniment. He then sent the music to Stuart Townend, another well-known worship songwriter and musician to seek his input for writing a suitable lyric. Townend recognised something very compelling about the tune and was inspired to write the lyrics we now know as "In Christ alone!" In the 20 years or so since its composition, this hymn has become a firm favourite. The words describe the power of Christ in people's lives, his birth, life and death and a final statement of Christian commitment. The power of the music is in the opening arching phrase of the melody of the first two lines of words, which is repeated for the next two lines and returns for the final two lines. The intervening melody rises to new heights and maintains the arch-like shape.

The recording I have used is particularly apt because it uses a virtual choir. In due course, I expect we may see more such virtual music-making during the "Lock-down" measures

It is relatively unusual for the melody to be written first, but it proves the point that words and music need to be of the highest calibre to achieve the full power to inspire.

The second hymn is "All for Jesus, all for Jesus" AM 421. The words were written by W J Sparrow-Simpson as part of the passion-tide cantata "The Crucifixion" set to music by Sir John Stainer.



Figure 2 "All for Jesus, all for Jesus," AM 421

1. All for Jesus, all for Jesus,
this our song shall ever be;
for we have no hope, nor Saviour,
if we have not hope in thee.
2. All for Jesus, thou wilt give us
strength to serve thee, hour by hour,
none can move us from thy presence,
while we trust thy love and power.

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3. All for Jesus, at thine altar
thou wilt give us sweet content;
there, dear Lord, we shall receive thee
in the solemn sacrament.
4. All for Jesus, thou hast loved us;
all for Jesus, thou hast died;
all for Jesus, thou art with us;
all for Jesus crucified.
5. All for Jesus, all for Jesus,
this the Church's song must be;
till, at last, we all are gathered
one in love and one in thee.

The hymn comes at the end of the cantata “The Crucifixion” written by Sparrow-Simpson and set to music by Stainer. Although some of Sparrow-Simpson's text elsewhere in “The Crucifixion” may not reach as high a standard as one might expect, this hymn very effectively summarises the hope, atonement and power of faith. Themes also found in “Christ alone”. However, we inhabit a completely different sound world with Stainer's music. The verses are short and the melody is march-like where all the notes have equal length. The melody itself, starts with a rising shape after which it descends progressively to the end of the second line of words. Then the music follows a more arch like structure ascending to a climax at the end of the third line of words and a steady march home to the end.

I had planned to play the Menuet (Minuet) from Leon Boëllmann's Suite Gothique as the concluding Postlude on the organ and I have included a recording of it to complete this week's Sounds of Worship. As you will hear it is a lively piece in three sections, the first presents an opening idea repeated in different keys. The second section has a contrasting theme to it. Finally, the opening section returns to conclude the piece.

Leon B Boëllmann (1862-1897) was a French organist and composer who wrote music for a wide range of instruments and ensembles in his short professional career. However, his most enduring work is the Suite Gothique for organ. The Minuet has its origins as dance music and was introduced into classical music by Lully for the court of Louis XV1 (The Sun King). At that time, Minuets would have been played at a relatively stately speed, suitable for dancing. However, over time the Minuet movement became a regular feature of the orchestral symphonies, for example those of Haydn and Mozart, where they became increasingly lively and light-hearted. The Boëllmann Minuet follows in that later tradition.



Figure 3 Menuet from Suite Gothique by Leon Boellmann.