

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

Easter 5

The gospel for this Sunday has two notable quotes, “In my Father’s house are many dwelling places” and “I am the way the way; I am the truth and I am the life; no one comes to the Father except by me.” This gospel reading is also set as a reading in the Prayer Book for funerals because it summarises the essence of the relationship between God the Father and His son Jesus Christ and the hope of eternal life. The gospel describes the union we have with God through the humanity of Jesus Christ and the promise of heavenly life for all people. The music this week provides an interpretation of the key themes of faith, unity and the embodiment of the nature of God in Jesus Christ.

The first hymn is “Christ is the world’s Light” AM 609.

1. Christ is the world’s light, he and none other;
Born in our darkness, he became our brother.
If we have seen him we have seen the Father:
Glory to God on high.
2. Christ is the world’s peace, Christ and none other;
No one can serve him and despise a brother.
Who else unites us one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.
3. Christ is the world’s life, Christ and none other;
Sold once for silver, murdered here, our brother.
He who redeems us, reigns with God the Father.
Glory to God on high!
4. Give God the glory, God and none other;
Give God the glory, Spirit, Son, and Father.
Give God the glory, God with us our brother;
Glory to God on high.

Text: Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000) Tune: Christe Sanctorum; from Paris Antiphoner 1681



Figure 1 "Christ is the world's light" AM 609

The hymn is closely structured with the first two lines of each verse having the same basic formula but subtly varied to cover Christ’s birth, teaching, passion and redemption and union with God. It makes for a very concise and powerful hymn using simple means. The author, Fred Pratt Green was a Methodist Minister and prolific hymn writer. For example, in the Sounds of Worship for Maundy Thursday I featured “An upper room did our Lord prepare” AM 165 which is also by Green.

The hymn tune “Christe Sanctorum” has its origins in a 17th century Antiphoner. An Antiphoner is the name given to a book containing the chants used for the Divine Office as opposed to a Graduale which contains the antiphons for the Mass. The Divine Office, also known as the Breviary contains the official set of prayers "marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer". It consists primarily of [psalms](#) supplemented by [hymns](#), readings and other prayers and antiphons. Thus, the tune Christe Sanctorum would have originally used as an option to a plainchant melody for a text used in one of the Divine offices such as Lauds or Matins. Indeed, in most hymn books the tune is linked with a morning hymn “Nocte Surgentes”.

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The tune has a very unusual, if not unique, metre which suggests that Green had this tune in mind when he composed the text.

The Anthem which we would have sung to complement the above gospel hymn is “The Call” by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), which uses a poem by George Herbert (1593- 1633):

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:
Such a Light, as shows a feast:
Such a Feast, as mends in length:
Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
Such a Joy, as none can move:
Such a Love, as none can part:
Such a Heart, as joys in love.

Herbert was born into a wealthy and politically active family. After attending Westminster School he received a scholarship at Trinity College Cambridge. Subsequently he was appointed a fellow of the College where he specialised in Latin and Greek. He then had a short career as a Parliamentarian before being ordained in 1629. He was appointed rector of the small parish of Fugglestone St Peter with Bemerton near Salisbury. He was there for only a short time before he died of consumption in 1633. However, he left a lasting legacy of poetry and other publications. He was also an accomplished lutenist and his musical skills probably contribute to the way in which many of his poems have been set to music subsequently, including this setting by Vaughan Williams which is taken from his collection of “Five Mystical Songs”.

The poem “Come my Way” illustrates Herbert’s literary and word-play skills. For example, the structure of the first words of each line in all three stanzas. Also, the way in which he uses each of the key nouns from the first line in each of the subsequent lines. The meanings of some of the words have changed over time which partially obscures the immediacy of the text to our minds. Thus, in the second stanza, third line, “mends” should be understood as “improving” rather than “repairing”.

Vaughan Williams’ music has a melody which allows the for the accentuation of the words in the opening line. The melody is repeated for the second stanza but with subtly different harmonies to create interest. Then the music shifts key for the final stanza and the melody is stretched to create emphasis on key words. The music gets quieter towards the end and the last but one word “joys” gets stretched the most to underline the joyous hope of the entire piece.



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The final hymn is “Thy hand O God has guided” AM 814

1. Thy hand, O God, has guided
Thy flock, from age to age;
The wondrous tale is written,
Full clear, on every page;
Our fathers owned thy goodness,
And we their deeds record;
And both of this bear witness:
One Church, one faith, one Lord.
2. Thy heralds brought glad tidings
To greatest, as to least;
They bade men rise, and hasten
To share the great King's feast;
And this was all their teaching,
In every deed and word,
To all alike proclaiming
One Church, one faith, one Lord
3. Through many a day of darkness,
Through many a scene of strife,
The faithful few fought bravely,
To guard the nation's life.
Their Gospel of redemption,
Sin pardoned, man restored,
Was all in this enfolded:
One Church, one faith, one Lord
4. And we, shall we be faithless?
Shall hearts fail, hands hang down?
Shall we evade the conflict,
And cast away our crown?
Not so: in God's deep counsels
Some better thing is stored;
We will maintain, unflinching,
One church, one faith, one Lord.
5. Thy mercy will not fail us,
Nor leave thy work undone;
With thy right hand to help us,
The victory shall be won;
And then, by men and angels,
Thy name shall be adored,
And this shall be their anthem:
One Church, one faith, one Lord.

Text: Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891) Tune: Thornbury; Basil Harwood (1859-1949)

As a summation of the theme of our union with God through Christ, this hymn makes a triumphant declaration “One Church, one faith, one Lord”.

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Edward Plumptre was home schooled, after which came a brief attendance at King's College, London, before winning a scholarship at University College, Oxford, where he took a double [first](#), in mathematics and classics.

He was ordained in 1847, by Bishop Wilberforce, and joined the staff of King's College London where he stayed for 21 years. In addition to his academic and administrative activities at Kings College, he was also active in church ministry. From 1851 to 1858, he was assistant preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and in 1863 prebendary of St. Paul's. He was rector of Pluckley from 1869 and of Bickley from 1873.

In 1881, he resigned his work in London to become [Dean of Wells](#). He died in 1891 and was buried in the cathedral cemetery.

He wrote extensively in areas ranging across the interpretation of scripture, biography, verse, translation of Greek plays and hymns. The hymn "Thy hand O God" has been a regular in many hymn books along with one or two others. However, this ever-popular hymn gets a very powerful shot in the arm from its usual companion, the vigorous tune, "Thornbury" by Basil Harwood.

Harwood, like Plumptre, had strong Oxford connections. His first professional position was organist of St Barnabas', Pimlico in 1883, a post he held until 1887. He then served as organist at Ely Cathedral for five years, followed by a final move to Oxford in 1892 where he remained organist of Christ Church Cathedral until his retirement in 1909. After which he returned to Gloucestershire to manage his family estate there.

