



Partnership Lent Course



2004

Great Hymn Writers



Fred Pratt Green

Born: September 2, 1903, Roby (near Liverpool), England. Died in his sleep October 22, 2000 in Norwich.

Hymns singing 'It's such a dangerous activity ... you get this glow which you can mistake for religious experience.

Fred Pratt Green

A short study of the life and hymns of Fred Pratt Green
by Charles Royden

Introduction

Finish the following line -

‘Long ago. Prophets knew. Christ would come.....’

or try these -

It is God who hold the nations.....’

God is here as we his people.....’

‘For the fruits of his

When I said that I would be looking at Fred Pratt Green, some people said ‘Who is he?’ Fred Pratt Green is the only modern writer we have chosen in this course and he is unknown to many people. But the point of our opening exercise is to show that the chances are you do know his hymns , even if you have not thought about who wrote them.

The problems of modern hymn writing.

It has been said that Methodism was born in song. This might be true, but of course it is true that much religious uprising finds expression in song. It is in the singing of hymns that we express what we believe and religious movements can be judged by the quality of their hymns or songs, choruses or however they choose to describe them

I was born in 1960 and about the age of ten I would have been to morning services at the same church which Fred Pratt Green and his family once attended, Childwall Parish Church in Liverpool. We went there on church parades, other Sundays we usually found ourselves in the Methodist Church half a mile down the road.

His family moved to Wallasey, Cheshire, England which is where my family also ended up, my father being a Vicar in Wallasey.

It was when I was about ten years old, the 1970’s, that there came about a revitalisation of hymn writing. There are a number of hymn writers who stand out, we might think of Brian Wren, Fred Kaan or

Timothy Dudley-Smith, we should undoubtedly remember Fred Pratt Green, who has been described as the best Methodist hymn writer since Wesley. Out of this revitalisation and over the past 30 years, an amazing number of hymns have been written for the Christian church. Does Pratt Green stand out? It is perhaps worthwhile to consider the past 30 years and what has been going on in the music of our churches.

For many years the church had refused to go forward and use new music and new hymns. For some the appearance of a guitar or a tambourine was enough to cause them to literally walk out of church. For many other Christians inside the church the refusal to use any modern music caused them to leave their churches. There were difficult divisions and splits between the churches which would sing only traditional hymns and those willing to sing the new hymns or choruses which were being produced.

Out of this difficult controversy there has been real movement, some of the new choruses are now common place in churches and have been adopted into the mainstream. There is quality in some of the hymns and songs which have been written over the past 30 years but this quality is far from common. Not all of the new music has been of quality and that which some churches think of modern is now quite old fashioned. 'As the Deer' was written over 20 years ago, 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' was written in 1986.

These hymns stand out as being received widely across the churches, but they stand out in the midst of an enormous number of new 'worship songs' which characterise the worship life of many churches. There is something of a crisis in modern Christian hymns and the music used in our churches. The scripturally rich and edifying hymns which have fed God's people for many years have been jettisoned in many churches and replaced with the contemporary musical equivalent of junk food. People often choose their church depending on the quality of the music or 'worship' as they like to call it. This is a consequence perhaps of living in a consumerist society. But it means that if some churches stopped playing music those churches would be left with very little else. Churches are chosen because of the band.

Let's look at the some modern pieces

The words of many of the modern songs are often emotionally very strong but theologically they are weak and ambiguous. Indeed some of them can be downright suspicious. Take the psycho-sexual imagery of the following chorus.

Jesus take me as I am, I can come no other way.
Take me deeper into You, make my flesh life melt away.
Make me like a precious stone, crystal clear and finely honed,
Life of Jesus shining through, giving glory back to You.
David Bryant Copyright © 1978

The words of many of these songs may be fatuous, but they are used to serve a different purpose. They are used to create atmosphere, it is mood music. This 'praise music' or 'worship music' is not about affirmation of great Biblical truth, not about teaching of Christian doctrine. Indeed it is geared up to by passing the mind and appealing to the senses, to conjour up an experiential awareness of well being.

This is fundamentally important, the tunes become all important. They become memorable in the same way as a jingle in a television commercial. We all remember that
'Mr Sheen cleansumpteenth things clean.'
But the words themselves are not important it is capturing the senses which matters.

Rhythms and repetition are used not just to entertain congregations but also to stimulate and create an environment in which the emotions are fully engaged. The music is hypnotic, often rising to a crescendo at key points. The music seldom stops as it is used to affect mood whilst the leader is speaking in a voiceover format.

For the weak and vulnerable it is a form escapism and there is reassurance and security. For the thrill seeker, or those seeking a spiritual lift, it is exciting to be in the place where there is a sure guarantee that God is about to perform. One cannot help but to suspect that what is really important is not the Gospel message but rather what is taking in the weekly dramas of the church concert.

There is nothing apologetic in this because these churches which use lots of contemporary Praise and Worship music believe that it is God who has given the music. God is often made directly responsible for the lyrics and the tune and the publicity surrounding the 'service' makes it clear that as people perform the ritual singing, 'God will be inhabit the praises of His people.' The following words are typical of this albiet now quite old

Jesus, we enthrone you, e proclaim You our King.

Standing here in the midst of us,

We raise You up with our praise.

And as we worship, build a throne,

And as we worship, build a throne,

And as we worship, build a throne:

Come, Lord Jesus, and take Your place.

Paul Kyle (born 1953) © 1980

The conclusion is that if we do it properly "God will make an appearance." Its like the leader of the séance who tells people to hold hands and if they only concentrate hard enough the spirits will come. Many of the services which you will watch on Christian television remind me of African tribal spiritual gatherings. The repetitive rhythmic music being used to create frenzy and charismatic utterances.

After the service the congregation may be heard to repeat phrases such as "I just really felt like the Lord was in the worship today."

Thankfully God is present with his people when they gather in his name, even if they have lousy tunes, or do not sing at all.

Repetition is vital in this worship revolution as songs are sung over and over and over, with the intent of the emotional manipulation of the congregation. The picture of a swaying, eyes-closed, semi-conscious worshiper is now the goal of much current worship. The new style encourages public, individual demonstrations of piety, a phenomenon that always divides a congregation into the "truly" spiritual and the dead wood. Of course, such a distinction based on

who will raise hands and sway is absurd, but that has not stopped some worship leaders from coming to resemble a cheerleader. The leader will tell the audience what posture should be adopted and the music is used in a cynical manner to create a form of hypnosis among the congregation who will then become susceptible to the suggestions of the spirit filled speaker. Paul McKenna eat your heart out.

Of the 'hymns' which have gained recent popularity, many of them would have little value apart from the tunes which accompany them. It is hard to disagree with the assertion that many of them could have been written by Oprah. It is these tunes which penetrate and make the hymns memorable whilst offering little of sustenance.

So why pick a modern hymn writer ?

After all that I have said about the dangers of contemporary Christian music over the past 30 years, why pick a modern hymn writer?

The first thing to say about Fred Pratt Green is that he is a hymn writer. He did not write tunes, he wrote words to metre and we can affirm the quality of the words which he wrote. Tonight we will be able to sing his hymns to familiar tunes and concentrate on the words.

I wanted to be able to look at a modern hymn writer who wrote words which have quality about them, not sloppy choruses or 'worship songs' with repetitive words and lazy theology. I wanted to look at a hymn writer, not a tune writer, the words must stand scrutiny on their own and be powerful and have a good message. There are few writers we could say that about.

Fred Pratt Green has been described as the finest Methodist hymn writer since Charles Wesley. Like Charles Wesley, he speaks seriously about God and humanity and he grounds his hymn writing in the affairs of real life. Charles Wesley is undoubtedly a tremendous hymn writer and the theology which is contained in his hymns is outstanding and has stood the test of time. Pratt Green said

‘We are dwarfs alongside Wesley and Watts.’

But he knew that he was writing for a world which was culturally totally changed since Wesley. We are in a different intellectual and literary climate. He said that we have been

‘singing the Charles Wesley hymns now for many years
without the experience that created them’

There is a lot of Charles Wesley which is now out of date, some which fails to speak to our generation and even some which is downright unsuitable. Take the formidable hymn ‘And can it be.’ Is it realistic in our time to continue to sing

Hear him ye deaf; his praise ye dumb
Your loosened tongues employ
Ye blind behold your Saviour come
And leap ye lame for joy

In a generation which has become acutely aware of the importance of correct attitude to disabilities is this hymn really helpful?

Fred writes, like Wesley, in a celebration of Christian experience, but he is less ardent, more probing, more secular. He explores the way in which we defile God’s creation — can you imagine Wesley writing about ecology?

We need new hymn writers, but they need to have intelligence and theological grounding if we are to incorporate them into worship. Like Fred they must be less sentimental and less emotionally manipulative.

Fred’s obituary in the Times of 24 October 2000 quoted him as saying of hymns singing

‘It’s such a dangerous activity ... you get this glow which you can mistake for religious experience

Biography

Let me begin by just giving to you a brief amount of biographical detail—

Fred Pratt Green was born in Roby, near Liverpool, England, on September 2, 1903. He was ordained as a Methodist minister in 1928 and served circuits in the north and south of England until 1969. During his career as a minister he wrote numerous plays and poems hymns, but it was not until he retired that he began writing prolifically. Green wrote over 300 hymns and Christian songs as well as commissioned texts for special occasions.

He was the third child of Charles Green, a leather merchant, and Hannah, née Greenwood. The abbreviation Fred has been used by the author for his hymnwriting: his close family, and in particular his late wife Marjorie, used Derick. Pratt was the name of a relative, who was a Methodist preacher. His father resigned from the office of Wesleyan Local Preacher because he could not accept current teaching about eternal damnation for unbelievers.

Green worshipped with his family at Childwall Parish Church: attended Huyton High School. The family moved to Wallasey, Cheshire, England where the young Green attended Claremount Road Wesleyan Church and Wallasey Grammar School

In his schooldays, he showed interest in becoming an architect, but in fact took employment in his father's leather business. During the pastorate of Rev William Rushby at Claremount Road, and after hearing a sermon on John Masefield's *The Everlasting Mercy*, he offered for the Wesleyan ministry, about the time his friend Eric Thomas offered for the Anglican priesthood. The key to Fred's eventual choice of Methodism was its open welcome to Holy Communion.

From 1925 to 1928, he attended Didsbury Theological College. Green emerged from Didsbury convinced that fundamentalism is a grave misinterpretation of the Bible. That Christian unity, though seemingly unattainable, is an important goal and that the Church must involve itself in social concerns.

In 1967 he was appointed to the working party planning Hymns and Songs, a supplement to The Methodist Hymn Book, a task which was to set-off his hymnwriting career coincident with his retirement to Norwich at the end of his distinguished itinerant ministry.

Over two decades Pratt Green wrote around 300 hymns and songs which found their way across theological, denominational and national boundaries, his work gaining particularly wide use in the USA.

A phone call from Lambeth Palace in 1977 advised Pratt Green of the inclusion of one of his hymns in the official order of service for the nationwide celebrations of the Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. 'It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand'

In 1995, Frederick Pratt Green was honoured by the Queen with the award of an MBE for services to hymnwriting.

A serious writer

It is of importance that Fred Pratt Green did not start writing hymns until after he had retired and when he did he had a history of poetry writing behind him. Therefore his hymn writing came after a long period of ministry, it was grounded in years of preaching and pastoral understanding. It is therefore unsurprising that the ideas are powerful and extremely relevant and because of that are challenging about important issues of faith and action.

Fred Pratt Green was not a 'fluffy' Christian but somebody who appreciated the importance and was grounded in of the tradition and liturgy of the church.

We are going to start by singing one of his hymns which I am sure you will all recognise. This hymn 'God is here as we his people' was written by Fred Green Pratt for a Methodist Church in Texas to be sung at a festival of worship, music and the arts. In it we find references to the symbols of the Church and the sacraments but also to "honesty of preaching". The thrust comes in the last verse as we

sing

**"Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom,
In an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the gospel,
Help us work your purpose out"**

Teaching grounded in life

The words of his hymns are very much grounded in daily Christian living. Fred Pratt Green encouraged Christians to practice what they preach. Listen to the following hymn 'The Church of Christ, in every age' which call Christians to live out their Christian calling.

**Then let the servant church arise,
A caring church that longs to be
A partner in Christ's sacrifice,
And clothed in Christ's humanity.**

I have said that Fred Pratt Green was a serious hymn writer, he wrote things which are powerful in their own right, his words don't need mesmerising tunes, or vain repetition of catchy jingles. But of course saying serious things is futile unless they are said in a way that people can understand. One of the apparent strengths of Fred Pratt Green is that his writing is not obscure, it is challenging because we can understand it and it resonates with common sense. His writing speaks about life, the world we live in and our hopes and aspirations.

When describing the qualities he would want to see embedded deeply within the public culture of our national life in his hymn 'It is God who holds the nations', he begins dutifully enough by spelling it out in the language of service and what he calls "the discipline of freedom." In the same hymn he longs to live in a land where

"self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great."

And then he spells out his vision of the kind of society he'd most like to live in, by expressing a wish:

"may all races live together, share its riches, be at peace."

He challenges us to sign up to this simple vision of a multi-cultural, inclusive, fair and just society, a microcosm on earth of God's own heavenly kingdom.

Ecology

As well as dealing with the qualities of public life, Fred Pratt Green also gets the complicated question of ecology and the environment right too. In his hymn 'God in such love for us lent us this planet', he writes that God has given

**"plenty for all if we learn how to share it,
riches undreamed of to fathom and find."**

And he asks the good Lord to deliver us, to deliver us world without end, from the

"pollution, misuse and destruction"

there is encouragement for real responsibility as he warns

**"Long have we wasted what others have need of,"
"poisoned the fountain of life at its source."**

Jesus

Fred is not lacking in his ability to deal with complex theological issues, but he does so in a way that is always understandable and accessible, not full of obscure doctrine. Hymns such as 'When Jesus came to Jordan stand out as defining the life of Jesus and his mission

**He came to share temptation,
Our utmost woe and loss,
For us and our salvation
To die upon the cross.
So when the Dove descended
On him, the Son of Man,
The hidden years had ended,
The age of grace began.**

In contemplating the cross where Jesus died, Fred is just as theologically accurate and profound, but once more with poetic beauty and insight . Listen to how he describes the passion scene

**In mock acclaim, O gracious Lord,
They snatched a purple cloak,
Your passion turned, for all they cared,
Into a soldier's joke.
They did not know, as we do now,
That though we merit blame,
You will your robe of mercy throw,
Around our naked shame.**

Fred recognises that the scene of pain and suffering which should by rights fill the soul with fear and dread, does no such thing. Instead the death of Christ becomes the means whereby the believer discovers the mercy of God.

He describes how the cross is a contradiction, the apparent failure of the cross is the place from where the Kingdom grows and reaches out with God's love.

**Though empires rise and fall
Your Kingdom shall not cease to grow
Till love embraces all.**

Christian Service

Leslie Griffiths said

'whether he wrote for the Queen's jubilee or an international conference, for a church in Purley or East Finchley, he kept on worrying away at his two great themes, God's providence and the Church's task to continue Christ's ministry in this and every age. He invested his writing with great urgency, so often there is juxtaposition of praising God and calling for the Christian to respond in service. Sometimes it is quite surprising and takes the reader by surprise. An example of this might be 'For the fruits of his creation' We start by thanking God and then in the second verse we are called upon to recognise that the way to offer thanks to God is in

practical ways which can be measured and assessed.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
In the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
In our world-wide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

Reading his hymns it is hard to avoid the constant calling to active Christian service and commitment. The message is urgent and demands attention as expressed in the hymn 'The Church of Christ in every age'

Across the world, across the street
The victims of injustice cry
For shelter and for bread to eat
And never live until they die.

This is a searing indictment of a world that had been so blessed by its bountiful Creator. And something had to be done about it.

In 1977 he was commissioned by the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral to write a hymn for the Celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. A hymn written by Fred could never be just a hymn of triumph or praise. In 'It is God who holds the nations' there is predictably a cutting edge. It speaks powerfully to our nation. Listen to the words of the last verse.

He reminds us every sunrise
that the world is ours on lease:
For the sake of life tomorrow
may our love for it increase;
May all races live together,
share its riches, be at peace:
May the living God be praised!

Never lacking in honesty

So much of hymn writing fails to recognise our shared human frailty. We sing words which so often have little resonance with normal daily living. Think of a hymn which we sang in church yesterday,

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Christ is in you the hope of glory in our hearts.

He lives! He lives!

His breath is in you, arise a mighty army, we arise!

*Now is the time for us to march upon the land,
Into our hearts He will give the ground we claim.
He rides in majesty to lead us into victory,
The world shall see that Christ is Lord.*

Lots of life and great to sing but are we a mighty army which is scoring one victory after another claiming ground for Jesus? This is not my experience of the church.

Much more realistic and perhaps coming out of his own personal experience and pastoral grounding we read words which reflect more accurately our common experience which is not full of all the answers. In the hymn 'When our confidence is shaken' Fred is prepared to wrestle with the weaknesses of our faith

When our confidence is shaken
In beliefs we thought secure;
When the spirit in its sickness
Seeks but cannot find a cure:
God is active in the tensions
Of a faith not yet mature.

Conclusion

If I had to think why we sing in church I would think perhaps of the passage from Colossians *Chapter 3:16*

'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.'

We sing because it is a way of reinforcing the teaching of Christ. We sing because we want to use spiritual songs to convey the words of Christ to us in another way than simply reading them.

So let that be the test of Fred Pratt Green. Do his hymns speak to us the words of Christ in our generation. Do they exhort and encourage us, challenge and comfort us with the words of Christ. I believe that they do.

Some of the Hymns of Fred Pratt Green

Blest Are They Who Trust in Christ

How blest are they who trust in Christ
When we and those we love must part:
We yield them up, for go they must,
But do not lose them from our heart.

In ripened age, their harvest reaped,
Or gone from us in youth or prime,
In Christ they have eternal life,
Released from all the bonds of time.

In Christ, who tasted death for us,
We rise above our natural grief,
And witness to a stricken world
The strength and splendour of belief.

Christ Is the World's Light

Christ is the world's Light, Christ and no other;
Born in our darkness, he became our Brother.
If we have seen Christ, we have seen the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Peace, Christ and no other;
No man can serve Christ and despise his brother
Who else unites us, one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's Life, Christ and no other;
Sold one for silver, murdered here, our Brother -
Christ who redeems us, reigns with God the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and no other;
Give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;
Give God the glory, God in Man my brother:
Glory to God on high.

For the Fruits its of This Creation

For the fruits of all creation,
Thanks be to God;
For the gifts to every nation,
Thanks be to God;
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earth's safe-keeping,
Thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labour,
God's will is done;
In the help we give our neighbour,
God's will is done;
In our world-wide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit,
Thanks be to God;
For the good we all inherit,
Thanks be to God;
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all that love has found us,
Thanks be to God.

Tune: Ar hyd y nos

God Is Here

God is here! As we his people
Meet to offer praise and prayer,
May we find in fuller measure
What it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
All our varied skills and arts
Wait the coming of his Spirit
Into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us
Of our lifelong need of grace;
Here are table, font and pulpit;
Here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
Here in silence, as in speech,
Here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome
In the Shepherd's flock and fold,
Here as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us as of old,
Here the servants of the Servant
Seek in worship to explore
What it means in daily living
To believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom,
In an age of change and doubt,
Keep us faithful to the gospel,
Help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
All we have to give, receive:
We, who cannot live without you,
We adore you! we believe!

Tunes: Abbot's Leight, Bethany, Blaenwern

God in such love for us

- 1 God in such love for us lent us this planet,
Gave it a purpose in time and in space:
Small as a spark from the fire of creation,
Cradle of life and the home of our race.
- 2 Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
Life that sustains us in body and mind:
Plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
Riches undreamed of to fathom and find.
- 3 Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
Long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
Long have we wasted what others have need of,
Poisoned the fountain of life at its source.
- 4 Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
Ours, as God's stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse, and destruction,
Good Lord deliver us, world without end!

Tune : Stewardship

It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand

It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand;
It is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land;
It is God who builds his City on the Rock and not on sand:
May the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present
hour;
Who recalls us to our senses when a nation's life turns sour;
In the discipline of freedom we shall know his saving power:
May the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation, looking back, has cause to celebrate
Those who win our admiration by their service to the state;
When self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great:
May the living God be praised!

He reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease:
For the sake of life tomorrow may our love for it increase;
May all races live together, share its riches, be at peace:
May the living God be praised!

Tune: Vision or Mine eyes have seen

O Christ, the Healer

O Christ, the Healer, we have come
To pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored,
When reached by love that never ends?

From every ailment flesh endures
Our bodies clamour to be freed;
Yet in our hearts we would confess
That wholeness is our deepest need.

How strong, O Lord, are our desires,
How weak our knowledge of ourselves!
Release in us those healing truths
Unconscious pride resists or shelves.

In conflicts that destroy our health
We diagnose the world's disease;
Our common life declares our ills:
Is there no cure, O Christ, for these?

Grant that we all, made one in faith,
In your community may find
The wholeness that, enriching us,
Shall reach the whole of humankind.

Tune: Song 34 mv

Of All the Spirit's Gifts to Me

Of all the Spirit's gifts to me,
I pray that I may never cease
To take and treasure most these three:
Love, joy, and peace.

The Spirit shows me love's the root
Of every gift sent from above,
Of every flower, of every fruit,
That God is love.

The Spirit shows if I possess
A love no evil can destroy,
However great is my distress,
Then this is joy.

Though what's ahead is mystery,
And life itself is ours on lease,
Each day the Spirit says to me:
Go forth in peace!

We go in peace - but made aware
That in a needy world like this
Our clearest purpose is to share
Love, joy, and peace.

Rejoice in God's Saints

[Juliana of Norwich](#) , d. c. 1443, English religious writer, an anchoress, or hermit, of Norwich called Mother (or Dame) Juliana or Julian. Her work, completed c. 1393, *Revelations of Divine Love*, is an expression of mystical fervor in the form of 16 visions of Jesus. Dominant ideas are the great love of God for men and the detestable character of human sin. She is considered one of the greatest English mystics.

1. Rejoice in God's saints
This day of all days!
A world without saints
Forgets how to praise!
Rejoice in their courage,
Their spiritual skill;
In Julian of Norwich
Rejoice, all who will!

2. The candle she lit
Six centuries gone,
By darkness beset
Shines quietly on.
Her cell is no prison,
Though narrow and dim,
For Jesus is risen,
And she lives in him.

3. How bright in her cell
The showings of God!
No writings could tell
What love understood.
She suffers his Passion,
She grieves over sin;
She knows his compassion
Has made us all kin.

4. How courteous is God!
All love and all light!
In God's Motherhood
She finds her delight.
She pleads for the sinner,
She wrestles with Hell;
God answers:

*All manner
Of things shall be well!*

5. Dear Lord, we would learn
To walk in this way,
With patience discern
How best to obey
That call to perfection
You taught us to face:
Lord, fix our direction,
And keep us in grace.

Seek the Lord Who Now Is Present

Seek the Lord who now is present,
Pray to One who is at hand;
Let the wicked cease from sinning,
Evil-doers change their mind.
On the sinful, God has pity;
Those returning God forgives.
This is what the Lord is saying
To a world that disbelieves:

'Judge me not by human standards!
As the vault of heaven soars
High above the earth, so higher
Are my thoughts and ways than yours.
See how rain and snow from heaven
Make earth blossom and bear fruit,
Giving you, before returning,
Seed for sowing, bread to eat:

So my word returns not fruitless;
Does not from its labours cease
Till it has achieved my purpose
In a world of joy and peace.'
God is love! How close the prophet
To that vital gospel word!
In Isaiah's inspiration
It is Jesus we have heard!

The Church of Christ, in Every Age

The Church of Christ in every age
Beset by change but Spirit led,
Must claim and test its heritage
And keep on rising from the dead.

Across the world, across the street,
The victims of injustice cry
For shelter and for bread to eat,
And never live until they die.

Then let the servant Church arise,
A caring Church that longs to be
A partner in Christ's sacrifice,
And clothed in Christ's humanity.

For he alone, whose blood was shed,
Can cure the fever in our blood,
And teach us how to share our bread
And feed the starving multitude.

We have no mission but to serve
In full obedience to our Lord:
To care for all, without reserve,
And spread his liberating Word.

Tune: Heronsgate

This joyful Eastertide

This joyful Eastertide,
What need is there for grieving?
Cast all your cares aside
And be not unbelieving:

After each verse...

Come, share our Easter joy
That death could not imprison,
Nor any power destroy,
Our Christ, who is arisen!

No work for him is vain,
No faith in him mistaken,
For Easter makes it plain
His Kingdom is not shaken:

Refrain Unison

Then put your trust in Christ,
In waking and in sleeping.
His grace on earth sufficed;
He'll never quit his keeping:
Refrain Unison

To Mock Your Reign, O Dearest Lord

To mock your reign, O dearest Lord,
They made a crown of thorns;
Set you with taunts along the road,
From which no one returns.
They did not know, as we do now,
How glorious is that crown:
That thorns would flower upon your brow,
Your sorrows heal our own.

In mock acclaim, O gracious Lord,
They snatched a purple cloak,
Your passion turned, for all they cared,
Into a soldier's joke.
They did not know, as we do now,
That though we merit blame,
You will your robe of mercy throw,
Around our naked shame.

A sceptered reed, O patient Lord,
They thrust into your hand,
And acted out their grim charade
To its appointed end.
They did not know, as we do now,
Though empires rise and fall
Your Kingdom shall not cease to grow
Till love embraces all.

When in Our Music God Is Glorified

- 1 When, in our music, God is glorified,
And adoration leaves no room for pride,
It is as though the whole creation cried:
Alleluia!
- 2 How often, making music, we have found
A new dimension in the world of sound,
As worship moved us to a more profound
Alleluia!
- 3 So has the Church, in liturgy and song,
In faith and love, through centuries of wrong,
Borne witness to the truth in every tongue:
Alleluia!
- 4 And did not Jesus sing a Psalm that night
When utmost evil strove against the Light?
Then let us sing, for whom he won the fight:
Alleluia!
- 5 Let every instrument be tuned for praise!
Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!
And may God give us faith to sing always:
Alleluia!

When Our Confidence Is Shaken

When our confidence is shaken
In beliefs we thought secure;
When the spirit in its sickness
Seeks but cannot find a cure:
God is active in the tensions
Of a faith not yet mature.

Solar systems, void of meaning,
Freeze the spirit into stone;
Always our researches lead us
To the ultimate Unknown:
Faith must die, or come full circle
To its source in God alone.

In the discipline of praying,
When it's hardest to believe;
In the drudgery of caring,
When it's not enough to grieve:
Faith maturing, learns acceptance
Of the insights we receive.

God is love; and he redeems us
In the Christ we crucify:
This is God's eternal answer
To the world's eternal why;
May we in this faith maturing
Be content to live and die.

Tune: Cwm Rhonda

When the Church of Jesus

When the Church of Jesus
Shuts its outer door,
Lest the roar of traffic
Drown the voice of prayer:
May our prayers, Lord, make us
Ten times more aware
That the world we banish
Is our Christian care.

If our hearts are lifted
Where devotion soars
High above this hungry
Suffering world of ours:
Lest our hymns should drug us
To forget its needs,
Forge our Christian worship
Into Christian deeds.

Lest the gifts we offer,
Money, talents, time,
Serve to salve our conscience
To our secret shame:
Lord, reprove, inspire us
By the way you give;
Teach us, dying Saviour,
How true Christians live.

Whom Shall I Send?

Whom shall I send? our Maker cries:
And many, when they hear this voice,
Are sure where their vocation lies:
But many shrink from such a choice.

For who can serve a God so pure,
Or claim to speak in such a Name,
While doubt makes every step unsure,
And self confuses every aim?

And yet, believing God who calls
Knows what we are and still may be,
Our past defeats, our future falls,
We dare to answer: *God, send me!*

Those whom God calls are purified,
God daily gives us strength to bend
Our thoughts, our skills, our energies,
And life itself to this one end.

When Jesus Came to Jordan

When Jesus came to Jordan
To be baptised by John,
He did not come for pardon,
But as his Father's Son.
He came to share repentance
With all who mourn their sins,
To speak the vital sentence
With which good news begins.

He came to share temptation,
Our utmost woe and loss,
For us and our salvation
To die upon the cross.
So when the Dove descended
On him, the Son of Man,
The hidden years had ended,
The age of grace began.

Optional Verse

Come, Holy Spirit, aid us
To keep the vows we make,
This very day invade us,
And every bondage break.
Come, give our lives direction,
The gift we covet most:
To share the resurrection
That leads to Pentecost.