

“Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.” – Colossians 3:16-17

SERMON IN SONG

November 15/16, 2008
Sun Prairie United Methodist Church
Hymn Stories



When the Roll is Called Up Yonder

This old favorite, written in 1893, was inspired by disappointment. James Black was calling roll one day for a youth meeting at his Methodist church in Williamsport, PA. One name didn't answer – young Bessie, the daughter of an alcoholic. Crestfallen at her absence, James commented, “O God, when my own name is called up yonder, may I be there to respond.” Returning home, a thought struck him while opening the gate. Entering the house, he went to the piano and wrote the words and music effortlessly.



Old 100th

- vs. 1 Louis Bourgeois – 1551
- vs. 2 John Dowland – 1621
- vs. 3 Walker's Southern Harmony – 1835
- vs. 4 Old Church Psalmody – 1847
- vs. 5 Ralph Vaughan Williams – 1953

This is a hymn tune from *Pseaumes Octante Trois de David* (1551 - the second edition of the Genevan Psalter), and is one of the best known melodies in all Christian musical traditions. The tune is usually attributed to the French composer Bourgeois (1510 - 1560).

The Genevan Psalter was compiled over a number of years in the Swiss city of Geneva, a center of Protestant activity during the Reformation, in response to the teaching of John Calvin that communal singing of psalms in the vernacular language (French, in this case) is a foundational aspect of church life. This was in contrast to the prevailing Catholic practice at the time of sacred texts being chanted in Latin by the clergy only. Calvinist musicians including Bourgeois supplied many new melodies, and adapted others from sources both sacred and secular. The final version of the psalter was completed in 1562. Calvin intended the melodies to be sung in plainsong during church services, but harmonizations were provided for singing at home.

The 5th verse was sung at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, with harmonization and arrangement by the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams.



How Can I Keep From Singing?

Listed in some hymnals by the opening line "My Life Flows On," this is a Christian hymn written by American Baptist minister Robert Wadsworth Lowry in 1860. The original composition has now entered into the public domain. The song is frequently cited incorrectly as a traditional Quaker hymn.



O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

This is a hymn based on a long medieval poem attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, *Salve mundi salutare*. This poem talks about Christ's body, as he suffered and hung on the cross. It has seven sections, each addressing a part of Jesus' body: his feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart, and head. Our hymn is a translation of the seventh section *Salve caput crucentatum*, focused on Jesus' head. An intensely personal hymn, "O Sacred Head" acknowledges the pain and shame that Christ endured when he paid the price for our sin. The music for the German and English versions of the hymn is by Hans Leo Hassler, written around 1600 for a secular love song, *Mein Gmuth ist mir verwiret*. The tune was appropriated for Gerhardt's German hymn in 1656. Johann Sebastian Bach arranged the melody and used it five times in his *St. Matthew's Passion*; this arrangement has come to be known as Passion Chorale.



Whispering Hope

The song's lyrics were written in 1868 by Septimus Winner of Philadelphia, using the pseudonym Alice Hawthorne. It was published in the same year and was inspired by Biblical passages taken from Hebrews 6:19: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil." and from Romans 15:13: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit." During his lifetime, Winner had written or composed over 100 songs and over 100 instrumental pieces that became popular worldwide.



Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Robert Robinson converted to Christ at age 17 and became a Methodist minister. He later moved to the Baptist church and pastored in Cambridge, England. Following the tradition of ministers of the time, he wrote "Come, Thou Fount" as a hymn-poem for the conclusion of his sermon for Whitsunday, 1758. He was 23 years old at the time. Originally the hymn had four stanzas. The fourth stanza was omitted by Martin Madan in *Psalms and Hymns*, 1860 and has not been used since. The statement in stanza two, "Here I raise my Ebenezer" refers to I Samuel 7:12, "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the LORD has helped us.'" Ebenezer is Hebrew for "Stone of Help." Israel had suffered defeat because of its sin. But the people had repented of their sin, God had helped them and they were victorious. Samuel placed the stone to remind Israel that God had helped them in their victory. In stanza three, Robinson speaks of being "prone to wonder, prone to leave the God I love." This seems to be a forecast of his later life, when he lapsed into unstableness and became involved with Unitarianism. There is a well-known story of Robinson, riding a stagecoach with a lady who was deeply engrossed in a hymnbook. Seeking

to encourage him, she asked him what he thought of the hymn she was humming. Robinson burst into tears and said, "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then."



My Faith Looks Up To Thee

Ray Palmer wrote these lyrics in 1830 upon receiving a vision of Christ shortly after his graduation from Yale University, while working as a tutor at a New York school. However, he kept them to himself until meeting Lowell Mason on a street in Boston, MA. When Mason asked him to write something for a new hymnal, Palmer dug out his old notes and produced these lyrics, written two years earlier. After taking the lyrics home and reading them, Mason composed this tune. Several days later he saw Palmer again and said: "You may live many years and do many good things, but I think you will be best known to posterity as the author of *My Faith Looks Up to Thee*."



Will the Circle Be Unbroken

Ada Ruth Habershon wrote this song in 1907. The author of one of America's most celebrated hymns, the Englishwoman Ada Ruth Habershon has been largely excluded from its glory. Habershon was born in London to a devout Christian family. After receiving formal Bible training, she began an intensive study of scripture. Key influences included evangelist Dwight Moody and gospel singer Ira Sankey, with whom she shared lifelong friendships. She collaborated with American composer Charles Gabriel to produce this hymn, her most famous work, a hymn that was to propel the growth of gospel and country music around the nation.

Singing Sermon participants:

Rev. Susan, Harold Silvester, Andy Estervig, Amy Hawley, Livvia Goff, Pam Girard, Michael Hillestad, Marilyn Silvester, and Shana Tiltrum

Surprise quartet: Margaret Bresser, Bailey Hinz, John Bresser, and Rev. Susan