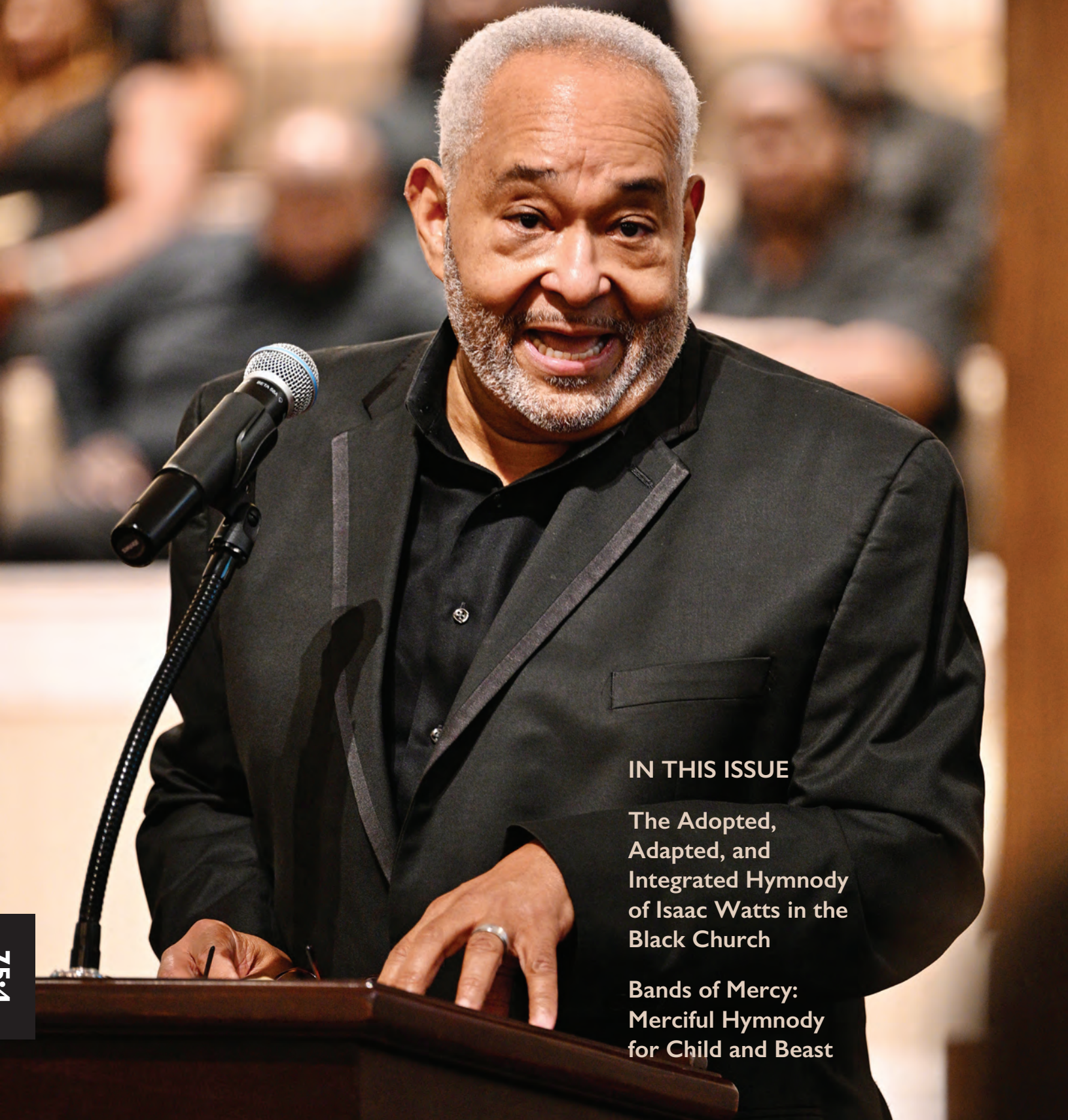


Volume 75 • No. 4 • Autumn 2024

# THE HYMN

A Journal of Congregational Song

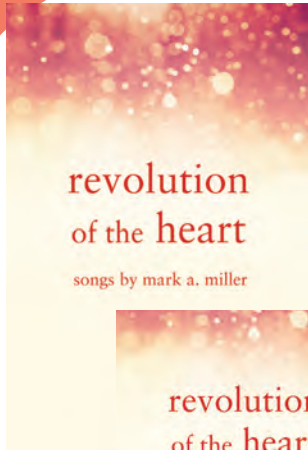


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The Adopted,  
Adapted, and  
Integrated Hymnody  
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Black Church

Bands of Mercy:  
Merciful Hymnody  
for Child and Beast

# must-have collections from

The GIA logo is a blue shield-like shape with the letters "GIA" in white, serif font.

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MARK A. MILLER

In 2022, GIA proudly released *Revolution of the Heart*, a powerful collection of songs by composer and 2024 Fellow of the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada, Mark A. Miller. We are now proud to present the recording of a selection of these songs, available as both CD and mp3 recordings.

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CD-1146 / Recording / \$16.95)

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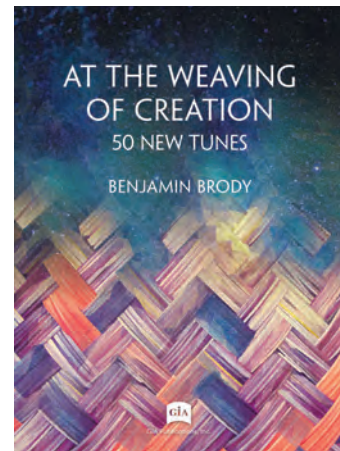
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Brody's second collection continues to expand his repertoire of genre-defying congregational song. These tunes bridge the gap between classic and contemporary, providing a fresh new sound that will find a home in churches for years to come.

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**ON THE COVER** James  
Abbington, FHS, July  
17, 2024, evening hymn  
festival, Friendship Baptist  
Church, Atlanta. Photo by  
Glen Richardson.

# Editor's Note



This issue includes the first installment of material from this summer's conference in Atlanta. There is a conference report where you can read a summary and highlights of each day's events, along with a few photographs. One of the highlights of the conference was James Abbington's, FHS, plenary address and hymn festival exploring the hymns of Isaac Watts in a Black Church context. This is a fitting way to conclude the marking of 2024 as the 350th anniversary of Watts's birth. Watch for more material from the Atlanta conference in upcoming issues!

Also in this issue is an article by Alisa Clapp-Itnyre on the intriguing, but little-known, hymns on animal welfare from the Bands of Mercy movement. In addition to the historical interest of this study, there are also many resonances with contemporary concerns, including the role of congregational song in social movements, especially in light of ongoing brokenness in human relationships with the rest of the natural world. There are many interesting connections to Mark Porter's final installment of his "Singing the Climate Crisis" column focused on the role of music in climate action and protests. If you enjoyed Mark's column, I encourage you to get his new book, *For the Warming of the Earth: Music, Faith, and Ecological Crisis*, on which the columns were based.

Finally, as always, I am grateful to our regular contributors for their excellent pieces in this issue: Anneli Loepp Thiessen's exploration of recent research on interfaith sacred song; Anne Gilliland's discussion of the right of publicity, especially in relation to artificial intelligence; Lindy Thompson's poem, "The Power of the Song"; and Beverly Howard's work as Book and Media Review Editor, including Fred Graham's, FHS, review of *The Dallas Hymnary*.

Carl Bear (he/him/his)  
[editor@thehymnsociety.org](mailto:editor@thehymnsociety.org)

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Regular membership (individual), \$95 per year; Retired, \$50 per year; Student, \$40 per year; Institutional subscription, \$115 per year; Life membership, \$2,000. Single copies of past issues of *The Hymn*, \$8 per copy for members of The Hymn Society; \$10 for non-members.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

*The Hymn* is a peer-reviewed journal of congregational song for church musicians, clergy, scholars, poets, and others with varied backgrounds and interests. A journal of research and opinion, containing practical and scholarly articles, *The Hymn* reflects diverse cultural and theological identities, and also provides exemplary hymn texts and tunes in various styles. Opinions expressed in *The Hymn* are not necessarily those of the Editor or of The Hymn Society.

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## From the Executive Director

---

Dear Members and Friends,

The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada and The Center for Congregational Song continue to carry out our mission “to encourage, promote, and enliven congregational singing” in the belief that “the holy act of singing together shapes faith, heals brokenness, transforms lives, and renews peace.” The following is the report that I submitted for The Hymn Society’s Annual Meeting that was held on July 30, 2024.

The past few years have seen significant change for The Hymn Society, including the establishment of The Center for Congregational Song, staff expansion, new programs, new conversation partners, and increasing diversity in membership, leadership, and programming. These years have likewise been a time of celebration, as we marked our 2022 centennial in a variety of ways. Moreover, we have faced some difficult challenges, including a pandemic that put a halt to in-person gatherings. Now that the pandemic is past, we face some new challenges for re-engaging members and other constituents in ways that are compelling, engaging, and accessible.

### Into the Future

Over the past year the Executive Committee has engaged in a process of strategic planning that involved broad consultation and intensive reflection. In May 2024 the following three strategic goals were adopted to guide our priorities through 2029:

- Explore ways (including a potential name change) to make our identity and purpose clear to our own members and those who meet us, so that we can reach the full range of people who might benefit from our work. This exploration will consider how to fulfill our commitment to be a bi-national organization.
- Develop groups of practitioners and scholars who will meet regularly through the year to facilitate research and professional development so that collaboration can take place more frequently and its results be shared more widely.
- Experiment with alternative ways of gathering (either digitally or in person) so that more people will access the energy, renewal, and refreshment of these events.

These goals were adopted to broaden our reach, foster greater collaboration, and provide greater access to our gatherings and resources. Efforts to achieve the first

goal will be pursued by the Executive Committee, while implementation of the other two goals will be driven by the staff.

### Key Accomplishments in 2023–2024

The following are some of our key accomplishments from the past year:

The Hymn Society held its Annual Conference in Atlanta, with a total of 218 participants—199 in person and 19 online, compared with 268 participants in 2023 and 373 at the centennial conference in 2022.

The Center for Congregational Song sponsored a three-day in-person retreat, *Writing the Church’s Song*, led by Jacque Jones, FHS, and Mark Miller, FHS. The program was held in Richmond, Virginia, in November 2023, with 24 participants.

The Center has partnered with Ben Brody and Whitworth University to produce a fifth season of *Voices United: A Congregational Song Podcast*.

In January the Center collaborated with Red Create, a Latin American network for worship and music, on a Latinx Connection Program that brought together worship leaders from Latin America with North American worship leaders of Latinx descent.

The Center continues to serve as a convener for conversations on important topics, such as copyright, royalty reparations, and disability.

In November 2023, in a partnership with Discipleship Ministries, several Hymn Society members presented a panel discussion and a public hymn festival in conjunction with the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). Subsequently, The Hymn Society applied for and received related organization status with the AAR.

The Hymn Society sponsored a third online six-session webinar series in 2023–2024 entitled “The World Sings” that drew more than 35 participants (down from 100 in 2022–2023) to engage with knowledgeable presenters from around the world who spoke on singing in a variety of cultural settings and issues.

In January 2024, The Hymn Society sponsored an eight-session online course on hymnody, “Theology of Hymns,” led by Heather Josselyn-Cranson, OSL, with 20 persons participating.

During the spring of 2024 The Hymn Society sponsored online colloquia for textwriters (led by John Thornburg, FHS) and tunewriters (led by Kate Williams).

In April 2024, we celebrated the publication of *A Calling and a Community*, with an online gathering featuring

Paul Richardson, FHS, Deb Loftis, FHS, and Carl Daw, FHS. 78 persons participated.

We conducted a series of nine online interviews with Hymn Society leaders that drew 304 registrations.

We continue to publish a peer-reviewed journal, *The Hymn*, that reaches not only our individual members, but also nearly 200 libraries worldwide, continuing to make a significant contribution to scholarship while expanding cultural and methodological perspectives.

Our monthly newsletter, *The Stanza*, is chock full of news and other items of interest, reaching more than 4,300 persons each month.

The Hymn Society and The Center have published blogs on ongoing basis, including *Word and Song: A Lectionary Reflection*; *Centered in Song*; and *Puentes* (Spanish/English).

## Programs and Activities for 2024–2025

Our plans for the coming year include:

- a three-day *Writing the Church's Song* retreat, led by Dan Damon, FHS, and Richard Leach, to be held in-person near Denver, Colorado, in November;
- a continued partnership with Red Create for more events in the Latinx Connection Program;
- an Ambassadors program to be held at Wingate University;
- a new webinar series with a broader variety of topics, including seasonal planning, copyright, the legacy of Erik Routley, and singing in Cebuano and Black British congregations;
- an online course to be held in January on congregational song in worship, led by Jonathan Hehn, OSL, and geared to musicians, pastors, and other leaders;
- a fourth series of nine interviews with Hymn Society leaders;
- colloquia for text and tune writers to be held online, led by Carl Daw, FHS (text) and Zach Stachowski and Bex Gaunt (tune), beginning in March 2024;
- Annual Conference to be held July 13–16, 2025, in Detroit, with a theme of “We Believe: Faith, Community, and Congregational Song.” Plenary speakers include Margaret Aymer, Jennaya Robison, and Peter Marty. Festival leaders include Jan Kraybill, FHS, Mary Louise Bringle, FHS, Brandon Waddles, Robert Batastini, FHS, Phillip Morgan, and C. Michael Hawn, FHS.

## Membership

Membership numbers showed remarkable stability from 2019 through 2022, but during the past year we experienced a noticeable drop in both individual and institutional memberships.

Here are membership statistics for the past five years (as of September 30 in each year):

	Individual	Institutional	Total
<b>2023</b>	879	166	1,045
<b>2022</b>	978	200	1,178
<b>2021</b>	928	214	1,142
<b>2020</b>	944	251	1,195
<b>2019</b>	926	251	1,177

One of our goals for the coming year will be to increase membership by conducting a membership drive and reaching out to lapsed members.

## Financial Support

The Hymn Society has been fortunate to enjoy robust and generous financial support from its members. During 2024 we received 1,157 contributions, down from 1,472 contributions in 2022 and 1,270 donations in 2021.

The total dollar amount of contributions for 2023 was \$105,054 from 559 individual donors, of which \$19,327 was designated for the endowment. This is down from our 2022 total of \$182,512 from 730 persons. In 2022, however, \$87,463 was designated for The Hymn Society's endowment through the Centennial Fund campaign. The number of donors was also affected by the smaller number of conference participants in 2023 compared with the well-attended centennial conference in 2022.

More than \$5,000 was contributed in 2023 for Love-lace scholarships (down from \$6,500). The Annual Fund for support of Hymn Society operations received \$40,355, down from \$45,171 in the previous year. We currently enjoy the support of 29 recurring donors. In addition, we received a \$10,000 grant from the Baugh Foundation to support our work in 2023.

Thank you for your support!  
Sing a new song!

J. Michael McMahon (he/him/his)  
Executive Director

# From the President



Fellow Hymn Society friends, it is with great joy and enthusiasm that I begin my term as President of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. I would first like to congratulate and thank Hilary Donaldson for her service to The Hymn Society these last four years as President-Elect and President. She has served with enthusiasm and a strong commitment. Her solid leadership has guided us in directions which contribute to a very strong organization. I am thankful for her mentorship to me and look forward to receiving more guidance from her as she continues on the Executive Committee as Past President.

I am sure that those of you who attended our conference this summer are still basking in the excitement and energy gained from the week. I came away very exhilarated. Allow me to share a little about my past. I grew up attending a Black Baptist Church. From an early age I knew that my calling was in ministry. Initially, I felt called to the preaching ministry. I began directing choirs and playing the organ in churches my sophomore year in high school. Because I was nurtured and encouraged by many people in the church and music teachers and ministers of music, I was pulled in the direction of church music. Throughout my college studies in undergraduate and graduate school, I held church positions. This confirmed to me that my calling was to be a Minister of Music. All of the churches I have served have been traditional white Presbyterian congregations. I did not use music from the Black tradition in these churches with the exception of a Spiritual occasionally. It has been during the last twenty years that I have regained an appreciation for the style of music and worship I experienced in my childhood church. This year's conference was a great reminder of my past. I am grateful to Felicia Patton, chair of the planning team, and her team members, for the wonderful conference. I extend my thanks to them.

As I begin my term as your President, I am excited for our future. We have an opportunity to reflect on and learn from what members who preceded us have done. They have laid a good foundation from which we can continue to build upon. The church's approach to ministry has changed from the time The Hymn Society was formed 102 years ago. The message of the Gospel remains the same, but the means of communicating it have changed. The makeup of congregations has changed. There are different needs. A variety of styles of music have been introduced, including Praise and Worship and Global. The music from different cultures plays an important role in the music we use in worship. Certainly, traditional hymns remain the backbone of many churches. This is a time when we as a Society are considering who we are as an organization and what

adjustments we can and should make to help The Hymn Society remain relevant and effective. To this end, the Executive Committee formed a Strategic Planning Team. This team began meeting in the summer of 2023. After months of dialogue and gathering information from members of the Society, the committee identified three goals for the next five years of The Hymn Society and Center for Congregational Song. These were presented to the Executive Committee who enthusiastically endorsed them. They are:

- Explore ways (including a potential name change) to make our identity and purpose clear to our own members and those who meet us, so that we can reach the full range of people who might benefit from our work. This exploration will consider how to fulfill our commitment to be a bi-national organization.
- Develop groups of practitioners and scholars who will meet regularly through the year to facilitate research and professional development so that collaboration can take place more frequently and its results be shared more widely.
- Experiment with alternative ways of gathering (either digitally or in person) so that more people will access the energy, renewal, and refreshment of these events.

As we work towards making these goals a reality, I ask that you consider how you might contribute to achieving them. We are a large and diverse group with many needs, desires, and gifts. We also have a variety of tastes in church music. These are characteristics of which we should be proud. This is a time when we should work to expand our knowledge, our musical repertoire, and our support of one another.

In the coming months I ask each of you to consider how you can contribute to the growth of The Hymn Society. When I speak to colleagues, many of them are not aware of The Hymn Society. This is an opportunity for you to become involved in evangelism. Invite friends to join us. Invite them to one of the many webinars. Encourage hymn- and tunewriters to attend our writing retreats. Share *The Hymn* and *The Stanza* with them. Begin promoting next year's conference in Detroit. The more enthusiasm we show to others, the more they will want to learn about us and become involved. Be a strong agent.

I joined The Hymn Society many years ago but did not start attending conferences until 2010. I participate in the webinars and interviews which are held online. All of these resources are invaluable to me. When I

retired six years ago, it became necessary for me to make choices of what professional organizations I would continue to maintain my membership in. The Hymn Society was, and remains, at the top of that list.

When I accepted the invitation from the Executive Committee to become President-Elect, I shared that I was very humbled by this opportunity. I also shared some apprehensions I had. However, I was assured that there would be a lot of support from Mike McMahon, Executive Director of the Society, the staff, and Executive Committee. I have found all of this to be true. In addition, I have found you, the membership, to be a very big family who are supportive of one another. It is you, the membership, who make The Hymn Society an extremely strong organization. Please join the Executive Committee and me as we venture into a new and exciting time in our history.

I leave you with the words of Fred Pratt Green:

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 I have given messages in worship on music or have led hymn festivals, I frequently have given them the title, “The Faith We Sing.” It is an all-encompassing title which points us to the fact that we are singing God’s message. It reminds us that, through the use of a variety of styles of hymns and songs, both familiar and new to us, we are a community of faith using music to strengthen our faith. May all we do as a Society encourage and affirm this mission.

Charles D. Frost (he/him/his)  
[president@thehymnsociety.org](mailto:president@thehymnsociety.org)

## From the Director of Research

Dear friends,

Here is my Director of Research report for 2024.

I would first like to share with you a report on our 2024 Emerging Scholars Forum.

We had three excellent finalists:

1. Fernando Berwig Silva, a doctoral student at SMU, presented “Appropriation or Solidarity? Investigating Transnational Latina/o/x Church Music Practices”
2. Nick Klemetson, a doctoral student at SMU, presented “‘How’ Does a Hymn Mean? Words and Music as Theological Expression”
3. Deanna Witkowski, who recently graduated with a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh, presented “Jazz in the Pews: Mary Lou Williams, Eddie Bonnemère, and the Community of St. Thomas the Apostle”

It was a very hard decision as these were all outstanding papers and presentations, and the winner was Fernando Berwig Silva.

I would like to thank our judges, Carl Bear, Adam Perez, and Becca Whitla for all of their work throughout this process.

Congratulations to Fernando who will receive \$150 towards purchasing books for research and whose paper will be published in *The Hymn*. We hope that Nick and

Deanna will submit their papers for publication in *The Hymn* as well.

I want to take this opportunity to ask all of you who know young scholars working in the area of congregational song to please let them know about the Emerging Scholars Forum for our 2025 conference in Detroit and encourage them to apply!

Moving to the McElrath-Eskew Research Fund, this year we received one application from Matthew Hoch who was awarded the grant to support a research trip to Sewanee: The University of the South to look at the “hymn selection and programming over the past fifty years at both All Saints’ Chapel and the School of Theology.” We are pleased to support Matthew in this important work and look forward to hearing about his insights from his research!

If you or anyone you know is conducting research in congregational song and could use funding to help with your research, we encourage you to apply for the McElrath-Eskew Research Fund. More information can be found at The Hymn Society’s webpage: <https://thehymnsociety.org/resources/mcelrath-eskew-research-fund>.

Thank you for the continued opportunity to serve as your Director of Research, and I look forward to seeing you all next year in Detroit!

Stephanie A. Budwey (she/her/hers)  
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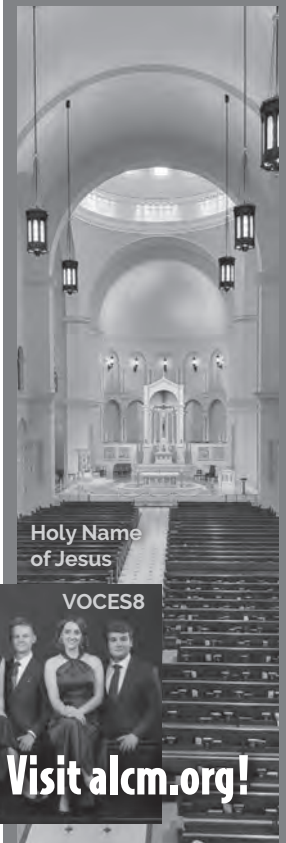
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## 2025 Annual Conference in Detroit

Plan to join friends and colleagues for next year's Annual Conference of The Hymn Society to be held at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, July 13–16, 2025. Be sure to mark those dates in your calendar today!

The conference theme is “We Believe: Faith, Community, and the Holy Act of Singing.” Come and celebrate congregational song that shapes faith, heals brokenness, transforms lives, and renews peace. Our focus on faith and community is related to next year's celebration of the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed. How do we gather and sing our faith today as church communities face rapid change and fresh challenges?

Plenary speakers for the conference include Margaret Aymer, Jen-naya Robinson, and Peter Marty. Evening hymn festivals will be led by Jan Kraybill, FHS, Mary Louise Bringle, FHS, Brandon Waddles, Robert Batastini, FHS, Phillip Morgan, and C. Michael Hawn, FHS.

Be sure to watch The Hymn Society's website, [www.thehymnsociety.org](http://www.thehymnsociety.org), for updates.

## Webinar Series on Congregational Song

During the coming year The Hymn Society is sponsoring a series of webinars on a variety of topics related to congregational song. All the presentations will be broadcast live, but they will also be available as recordings for registrants to view for an extended period. Here is the schedule of programs (all at 1:00 pm ET unless otherwise noted):

- October 1, 2:00 pm ET: Singing Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany — Eric Wall
- November 12: The Legacy of Erik Routley — Nancy Graham

- December 10: The Hinalad Project: Cebuano Congregational Song — Jean Nalam
- January 28: Singing Lament in Lent — David Bjorlin
- February 18: Reimagining Black British Gospel Music without Limits! — Dulcie Dixon McKenzie and Pauline Muir
- April 15: Copyright and Congregational Song — Brian Hehn

Registration for a single webinar is \$20 for members, \$25 for non-members, \$10 for students. Registration for the full series of six webinars is \$95 for members, \$125 for non-members, and \$45 for students. Additional information and online registration is available at [www.thehymnsociety.org](http://www.thehymnsociety.org).

## 100 Years of Song: Interview Series IV

Following from our centennial celebration in 2022, we are conducting a fourth series of online interviews with Hymn Society leaders and persons of note during the coming year. All the interviewees will be speaking about their own stories, their interest and experience as leaders in the field of congregational song, their involvement in and service to The Hymn Society, and issues that are facing us today.

Each interview will be made available for free as a real-time Zoom webinar, and registration is required to view the real-time broadcast. The interviews are being archived on The Hymn Society website where anyone may view them on demand. All broadcasts will take place on Mondays at 1:00 pm ET.

- October 21: Beverly Howard
- November 18: Mary Nelson Keithahn and John Horman
- December 16: Kim Harris
- January 27: Geoffrey Moore
- February 24: Saya Ojiri

- March 17: Benjamin Brody
- April 28: Gerardo Oberman
- May 19: Adam Tice, FHS
- June 9: Jacque Jones, FHS

To register for a single interview or for the entire series, visit The Hymn Society website, [www.thehymnsociety.org](http://www.thehymnsociety.org).

## Congregational Song: Planning for Liturgy

The Hymn Society and The Center for Congregational Song are sponsoring an online course, “Congregational Song: Planning for Liturgy,” during January and February 2025. The primary instructor will be Jonathan Hehn, OSL, a musician and liturgist currently serving as Choral Program Director and Organist at the University of Notre Dame. He is a brother in the Order of Saint Luke and holds degrees in music (BM, DM) from the Florida State University and theology (MSM, MA) from the University of Notre Dame.

The course is intended for pastors, musicians, and others who do not hold church music and/or theology degrees or who may have missed this area of study. Registration will be \$175 for members, \$225 for non-members, and \$275 for a pastor-musician team serving the same congregation. For full details and registration information, please visit <https://thehymnsociety.org/online-course-congregational-song-for-liturgy>.

## 2025 Online Program for Textwriters and Composers

In March, The Hymn Society and The Center will be offering an online colloquium for textwriters led by Carl P. Daw, Jr., FHS, and another online colloquium for tune-writers led by Zack Stachowski and Bex Gaunt. Each colloquium will begin with an online presentation on the art of creating texts or tunes, followed by several weeks

for participants to work on their own. Each program will conclude with an online master class in which each participant will receive feedback on their own original text or tune.

Watch forthcoming issues of *The Stanza*, our monthly e-newsletter, and check our website, [www.thehymnsociety.org](http://www.thehymnsociety.org), for more information on these programs.

### We Remember

Hymn Society members remembered at our Annual Meeting on July 30, 2024:



**Melva Wilson Costen, FHS**  
Atlanta, Georgia  
May 29, 1933–  
September 8, 2023



**Judith Archer Green**  
Hamilton, Ontario  
October 6, 1953–  
October 6, 2023



**W. Thomas Smith, FHS**  
Oaxaca, Mexico  
April 4, 1934–  
October 16, 2023



**Carol Ann Doran**  
North Andover, Massachusetts  
November 11, 1936–  
November 2, 2023



**Rae Whitney**  
Scottsbluff, Nebraska  
May 21, 1927–  
November 16, 2023



**Alice Parker, FHS**  
Hawley, Massachusetts  
December 16, 1925–  
December 24, 2023



**Mary Oyer, FHS**  
Goshen, Indiana  
April 23, 1923–  
January 11, 2024



**Elizabeth Cosnett**  
Liverpool, England  
May 17, 1936–  
January 22, 2024



**William Livingston Wallace**  
Christchurch, NZ  
March 9, 1933–  
February 26, 2024

## In Memoriam

### Alice Parker, FHS, 1925–2023



It was a beautiful autumn evening in October when our group pulled up to the parking lot of the Charlemont Federated Church in rural Massachusetts. My seven new friends and I were in the midst of our week studying composition with Alice Parker, FHS, in her home studio just a short drive from the Charlemont church, and we were to attend an “Alice Parker SING” with the community as part of our activities during the workshop. This was my first time to experience the magic of being led in congregational song by Alice—the first of many SINGs that I was fortunate of which to be a part.

As the setting sunbeams fired through the stained glass, we sang songs both utterly familiar and completely foreign to me that

evening. I was shocked at not only the volume with which the community audience was singing, but even more so the *feeling*. It was clear that these singers were well-versed in Alice’s expectations—ideal students of the demanding teacher.

Anyone who has sung with Alice Parker knows that she expected the full expression of heart and soul when singing together with a group. She accepted only the best from each singer, but she was adamant in explaining that the “best” had nothing to do with perfect pitch or beautiful tone. For Alice, the best expression of congregational song came from singing with style, knowing the historical context, conveying the meaning of the poetry, and above all else, putting the melody first.

For example, during the evening, Alice taught us the hymn “Let Us Break Bread Together.” (I had sung that hymn in church many times throughout my life, but it never came alive like it did with Alice that

day.) She spoke to us first about how the hymn would sometimes be used as a march in jazz and creole funerals as funeral-goers would process from the service to the meal afterwards. While the funeral was inherently a somber occasion, the song was more of a celebration of life and an expression of thanks for being together. So, the procession would be accompanied by all kinds of jazz instruments improvising along with the singers. Alice had everyone in the room improvise on various instrument sounds (vocal percussion, mouth trumpet, etc.), and the tempo was upbeat and swung. I never knew that a hymn I had sung so many times could feel so new and like a celebration. It left an incredibly strong impression in my mind all these years later, a sentiment I know I share with many others who got to attend one of Alice’s SINGs.

For any who aren’t familiar, Alice published a hymnal of her own in 2010 called the *Melodious*

*Accord Hymnal* (available to purchase through GIA Publications). In her preface, Alice stated, “Music and poetry come first in this hymnal...not theology or liturgy or any denominational loyalty. Each page is set up to give the pertinent information needed to perform the music well. There are mood-sonority indicators and metronome markings; style hints and breath marks. The intent is that singing in church should take its proper place in the broad stream of musical culture, rather than an unimportant footnote. Let us teach new songs and revive old ones, enabling our congregations to sing with understanding.”

I believe that is exactly the magic that Alice used when she led people in congregational song. She didn’t just teach *how* to sing a song, she taught us *why* we sing a song. She helped people across the world to understand the meaning of a hymn to its core, and she demanded honest expression in its performance, no matter the level of the singer. She notated her hymnal in a way that removed the complications of written-down music and instead imparted stylistic ideas (like *flowing, heavy, lonesome, vigorous, blues*), bringing centuries-old hymns to life in a modern context to absolutely any audience.

I have been asked many times “who will do the work of these SINGs when Alice is gone?” I must admit that I have yet to meet someone with the same passion and knowledge for congregational song as Alice, so perhaps it is up to each of us, in our own congregations, to continue a little of the work that Alice started and to expect greatness in the singing of our collective hymns. In this way, we can honor the memory of Alice Parker and, as she said, “we can make wonderful music in our sanctuaries.”

Submitted by Susan LaBarr  
Composer and Walton Music Editor

## Mary Oyer, FHS, 1923–2024



On March 10, 2024, my community of Goshen, Indiana, gathered to celebrate the life of Mary K. Oyer, FHS (1923–2024).<sup>1</sup> Mary was remembered as a remarkable centenarian: a sister, aunt, friend, scholar, and professor of enormous influence. The gathering at Goshen College Mennonite Church brought together family members, former students, and colleagues spanning Mary’s many decades of professional life to mark the passing of an indelible learner.

Mary graduated from Goshen College with a Music Major and Art Minor in 1945, whereupon her alma mater hired her to join the faculty as cello instructor and choral conductor. In 1958 she would become the first string player to earn a DMA degree from the University of Michigan.

In Mennonite communities, Mary is remembered as a trailblazing musicologist and professor and as the first woman to take a public role in denominational hymnal curation. During the 1960s, as the Second Vatican Council saw Roman Catholic leaders shaping significant reforms for church music, Mennonites were curating a musically conservative denominational hymnal for communities that sang primarily in four-part harmony. Mary was appointed Executive Secretary to the Mennonite Hymnal Committee, otherwise populated entirely by men. This work of studying and cultivating the voice of her denomination would animate Mary’s career for the duration of her professional life. Seeking original sources, Mary traveled to Edinburgh where she carried out archival research with renowned hymnologist Erik Routley, FHS. Mary’s scholarly rigor

was unprecedented among Mennonite collections, making *Memnonite Hymnal* (Herald Press, 1969) a compelling, if anthological, selection of songs (fully 97% of the songs were written before World War II).

In some mid twentieth-century Mennonite contexts, the Fine Arts were viewed as frivolous *worldly* distractions from a lived faith. Mary challenged and inspired generations of Goshen College students to dismantle this notion through a groundbreaking humanities course that celebrated, validated, and contextualized art across media. Through Mary, generations of students came to understand the arts as essential expressions of the human experience.

In 1969, a Fulbright scholarship allowed Mary to spend time in Africa where she studied and traveled in five sub-Saharan countries. This was the first of many overseas residencies which would find Mary learning and teaching in twenty-two African countries. From 1999 to 2004 she taught at the Tainan Theological College and Seminary in Taiwan. Through the years Mary developed relationships with international church musicians, many of whom regarded her as a dear colleague.

Mary’s travels challenged the pervasive Euro-centric paradigms of music and art education in which she had been formed. When serving as Hymnal Project Co-Chair for the collection that would become *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (Herald Press, 1992), Mary’s intercultural relationships and growing repertoire of world music helped shape a collection that invited worshippers in the United States and Canada to sing with a global church in tangible, new ways. *HWB* not only transformed Mennonite worship spaces, but was enormously influential ecumenically as her scholarship was recognized by The Hymn Society.

After forty-four years at Goshen College, Mary taught hymnody to pastors-in-training at Associated (now Anabaptist) Mennonite

.....  
1. Mary Oyer Memorial Service, March 10, 2024, <https://youtu.be/7ex7cL2Kloc>.

Biblical Seminary (AMBS) from 1989 to 1998. As a first-year Goshen College student in the year *HWB* was published (1992), I came to know then-professor *emerita* Mary through frequent hymn sings she led. Using an economy of words, Mary illuminated what was potent about a song, leading us to sing with deeper understanding. Her scholarship and attention to theological framing became a compelling archetype for hymnal curation.

One of my wiser professional intuitions from this time was to draw close to Mary's work. We corresponded through the years and though she was never formally my teacher, I counted Mary as a mentor and benefited from her affirmation and encouragement. Years later I accepted the role of Project Director and General Editor of the hymnal and worship book (*Voices Together*, MennoMedia, 2020) that would become the successor to *HWB* and was fortunate to enjoy



Mary Oyer and Rebecca Slough with the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee

visits with Mary, as well as phone calls, emails, and hand-written letters. She revealed some of the scars she carried from functioning in a patriarchy that found her competence threatening. She acknowledged mistakes and life-lessons. She sometimes probed our process, asking about a particular hymn, "I'm left wondering, what is our relationship to eighteenth-century harmony?" Above all, Mary cheered our committee forward with a singular enthusiasm.

"I won't get to hold *your* book," Mary assured me during one of our

visits in 2018, and yet, our correspondence continued. When email became too cumbersome for her, phone calls, visits, and letters remained. On November 3, 2020, I hand-delivered an inscribed copy of *Voices Together* to Mary's apartment. Given the COVID protocols of the moment, I waved to her behind my N95 mask from 15 feet away and handed the volume to a staff member from her retirement community. Five minutes later, she telephoned with words of congratulations and gratitude. In the weeks that followed, our visits were framed by her pages of handwritten notes—delights, curiosities, questions—about specific content in *Voices Together*. Getting to witness Mary's delight at the fruits of the committee's shared labor endures as a profound gift. For our friend, sister, aunt, colleague, and teacher, Mary Oyer, thanks be to God!

Submitted by Bradley Kauffman  
General Editor of *Voices Together*

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THEY TRY TO BURY US

# 2024 Annual Conference Report: “Without Limits: Singing the Congregation’s Song”

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
AND EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

PHOTOS BY THS LIFE MEMBER  
GLEN RICHARDSON

**T**his year’s Annual Conference in Atlanta included attendees from the United States, Canada, Argentina, Italy, Philippines, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. In all, 199 persons participated in person and 24 others took part online, including 42 newcomers.

## *Sunday*

This annual conference of The Hymn Society began with an organ recital held in Glenn Memorial Methodist Church on Emory University’s campus. Viktor Billa was selected as this year’s organ scholar and offered a wonderful concert on the 72-rank, three-manual Casavant Frères Op. 3529 organ which was installed in 1982. Viktor, originally from Ukraine, now serves as organist at Trinity United Methodist Church in Tallahassee, Florida, while working on his doctoral degree in organ performance. Not only was this recital delightful to listen to, but it was also fun to watch as Viktor embodied the music, feeling each piece. For Viktor, “music is prayer without words” and we began this year’s conference in deep prayer together. Highlights of the concert for me included Denis Bédard’s variations on “Amazing Grace” and the congregational singing of “Holy, holy, holy!” The concert ended with two pieces chosen to reflect the dream of peace for our world. “Peace I Leave with You” by Latvian composer Aivars Kalējs reminds us of God’s promise of peace. With its gentle and moving notes, God’s peace calmly fell on us and as the piece grew in intensity, I truly felt surrounded by and overwhelmed in God’s presence. The last piece, “Finale” from *Symphony No. 1 in D Minor* by Louis Vierne reflected the triumph of Christ who brings peace. From the first notes to its final three chords Christ’s glory and power filled Glenn Memorial. With gratitude to the George M. Hartung Memorial Fund/Organ Initiative which made this afternoon’s concert possible.

Sunday evening’s opening hymn festival, “Singing in the Spirit: Congregational Singing in the African American Tradition” was led by Raymond Wise and sponsored by Andreas and Tracy Teich. Wise serves as Professor of Practice in the African American Diaspora Studies Department and



Viktor Billa



**Sunday Hymn Festival**

Associate Director of the African American Arts Institute at Indiana University. Throughout the evening, Wise, along with the choir and musicians, led those gathered through a musical journey of the “Five Rs of Worship.” Through song we released our burdens, related to one another and to God, rejoiced and worshipped, were revived and restored in God’s presence, and, having been transformed, we were prepared to respond as witnesses of God’s goodness. Wise described the African American experience as a collect art where all are invited to participate, and the aim of the evening was to have a celebration. And celebrate we did! It was an evening immersed in God’s presence in the fullness joy. A favorite moment was Raymond Wise’s 91-year-old mother, Rev. Virginia Wise, helping to lead the closing song. What a wonderful time of allowing the music to flow through each of us and join our voices and hearts together again. Amen!

**Melissa Haupt, President-Elect**

## Monday

Monday began with Morning Prayer, sponsored by M. Milner Seifert in honor of Past Presidents of the Hymn Society. I led the service with Felicia Patton, Mark Miller, FHS, and the Lovelace Scholars. Following Morning Prayer, Alisha Lola Jones gave her plenary address, sponsored by the Junius B. Dotson Institute for Music and Worship in the Black Church & Beyond and J. Michael McMahon. In her address, “We Don’t Need No Music’: Pulse, Embodiment, and Shared Perceptual Experience in African American Worship,” Jones referred to Lena McLin’s book *The Pulse: A History of Music* (1977), explaining how people use the pulse of music to speak about many facets of their life in African American worship. Jones also pointed to Pearl Williams-Jones’s article “Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic” (1975), highlighting elements such as participation, improvisation, and oral transmission. This illuminating plenary address masterfully set up the incredibly powerful hymn festival for Monday evening.



**Above: Raymond Wise**  
**Below: Alisha Lola Jones**





**Top: Monday Sectional**  
**Middle: Monday Hymn Festival**  
**Bottom: Tuesday Morning Prayer**

I next attended the sectional “Teenagers, Global Song, and Liturgical Difference: A Panel Conversation” led by Emily Andrews, Nelson Cowan, Nate Glasper, and Paul Ryan. They spoke about the often-heard assumption that “of course the young people prefer contemporary worship music.” They then shared their findings from interviewing teenagers at Animate, a summer worship camp held at Samford University, which bring this assumption into question as the participants showed an appreciation for difference (mostly), including different musical styles, languages, and physical participation. Additionally, they spoke of the importance of agency and the need to listen to youth and give them the opportunity to plan worship with adults.

In the afternoon I attended the connection zone for academics, professors, and researchers, which I led with Maria Monteiro. Drawing from the goals of the strategic plan, we had a very rich conversation as we discussed the need to support young scholars, the desire to share resources for teaching as well as our own current research, and ways we might be able to gather throughout the year outside of the annual conference.

The day ended at Glenn Memorial Methodist Church with the hymn festival “The Seasonality of Black Sacred Music Education” led by Alisha Lola Jones. The festival echoed the morning’s plenary address, “We Don’t Need No Music,” and the focus on oral transmission—what Jones referred to as “orature” or oral literature—as we had no printed music or words. We were blessed to participate in an unbelievably moving testimony service led by Jones and elders who became what she described as “living epistles” as they each offered their testimony

through word, song, and instrumental music. There are not adequate words to describe this hymn festival and the powerful presence of the Spirit that we experienced that evening. With tremendous gratitude I carry the gift of this hymn festival with me.

Stephanie A. Budwey, Director of Research

## Tuesday

The third day of the annual conference of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada opened with a plenary address delivered by Khalia J. Williams titled “Resident Voices, Shared Breath: Cultivating Spiritual Community Through Song.” Williams focused on the interaction between particular components of worship and the cultivation of community. She shared how her own experience shaped her understanding of embodied congregational singing, leading her to argue that “singing together, music-making together, worshipping through the creativity of our song can lead to wholeness and connection, uniting our voices and spirits with one another and, ultimately, with God.” She ended by inviting conference participants to examine the connection between what we sing and how that shapes our actions and interactions with others.

The second half of the morning was dedicated to three parallel featured sessions, including a showcase of the fourth edition of *Flor y Canto* (2024) and Dollie Pankey’s invitation to reconsider the role of ring-shouts in empowering community singing. At the same time, this year’s Emerging Scholars—Deanna Witkowski, Nicholas Klemmetson, and Fernando Berwig Silva—gave participants glimpses into current research questions and methodologies that intersect with ongoing themes at Hymn Society gathering. Witkowski’s work reveals important historiographic windows into the history of jazz in liturgical music; Klemmetson examined the intersection of music, text, and meaning in hymnody; and Berwig Silva focused on questions of cultural appropriation in relation to religious musicking.

Lunch was followed by afternoon sectionals. A cursory glance at the sectional offerings attests to the thematic variety of the program: Karol Kimmel’s focused on children and hymnody; Adam Perez and Hilary Donaldson examined the conversation between music and theology; Lisa Hancock and Diana Sanchez-Bushong explored congregational worship in virtual spaces; and a five-scholar panel explored current challenges around conceptualizations of global song. These are but a few of that afternoon’s selections which demonstrate the breadth of issues that members of the society are currently engaged with.

Just as Tuesday’s opening plenary focused on congregational singing in the Black tradition, its evening program reflected the larger goal of The Hymn Society for this year’s annual conference: to showcase the cruciality and vitality of these Black traditions in the history and makeup of congregational singing. Thus, the day concluded with a hymn festival titled “Hymns, Psalms, and Spiritual Songs: Music from the Black Holiness and Holiness-Pentecostal Traditions,” led by Donté Ford. The festival focused on the repertoire of Charles P. Jones, a collection of traditional



Above: Khalia J. Williams

Below: Donté Ford



Pentecostal hymns from various authors, and choral pieces by Iris Stevenson, Sandra and Andraé Crouch, and others. Ford, who describes himself as a scholar-practitioner, was accompanied by an excellent group that helped him share music from these traditions. The gathered congregation shared eagerly in the repertoire, either reading music from the festival program, or learning by rote under Ford's excellent direction.

Marcell Silva Steuernagel, Editorial Advisory Board

## Wednesday

Following morning prayer, the keynote session for the day was delivered by James Abbington, FHS, Associate Professor of Church Music and Worship at Emory. In a happy coincidence, his paper, entitled "The Adopted, Adapted, and Integrated Hymnody of Isaac Watts in the Black Church," was given on the very day celebrating the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Watts. The Black Church has embraced the texts of Watts, who is affectionately known as "Dr. Watts" among clergy, musicians, and congregants. Abbington noted that *integration* was a better word in the title than *assimilation* in light of the creative and adaptive ways the texts are used in the tradition. These include the practice of lining out text and tune, pairing a Watts text with an additional refrain ("Come we that loveth the Lord" yoked to the refrain "We're marching to Zion"), and the use of select stanzas as a liturgical text (the first stanza of "From all that dwell below the skies" being one such example). For my morning sectional offering, I chose "Sam Sings On: A Legacy for the Church." How could one travel to Emory University and not celebrate Carlton "Sam" Young who served on the faculty, and at Cannon Chapel, from 1978-1985? The sectional was advertised as being led by Barbara Day Miller, Associate Dean Emerita of Worship and Music at the Candler School of Theology at Emory. However, we were also treated to the presence of Don Saliers, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Theology and Worship at Emory and another close associate of Sam's, who served as keyboard accompanist for the sectional. Rather than taking a chronological approach to examining Sam's musical contributions of seventy years, and not wanting to turn the



Above: James Abbington, FHS  
Below: Wednesday Hymn Festival





**Fellows of The Hymn Society**

session into a commercial for Sam's recently published autobiography *I'll Sing On: My First 96 Years* of which she was the editor, Barbara told the story of Sam's life and work through selected hymns, psalms, anthems, and other musical forms. Very few church musicians were so successful in embracing a diversity of musical styles from jazz, plainsong, world church repertoire, and classical choral repertoire.

The afternoon allowed participants to examine hymnals, psalters, and other rare books in the Pitts Theology Library, directly across the pathway Canon Chapel. The library building was built as an addition to the Candler School of Theology. This impressive and beautiful complex houses the largest collection of artwork by John August Swanson. Many of us wandered the halls, public spaces, and open classrooms, wanting to delight our eyes and imaginations with his vivid serigraphs.

Later in the afternoon we were given the opportunity to participate in yet another hymn festival at Glenn Memorial Methodist Church on the Emory campus. The festival was part of a new initiative of offering an Organ Institute during the conference; Nathaniel Gumbs directed this gathering. Organists of various experience and training all competently presented hymns with varied intonations and harmonizations using the texts of Isaac Watts. For those who find the hymn festivals to be the heart of the summer conference, it was a joy to be able to sneak one more festival into an already full schedule. The organists and Nathaniel Gumbs are to be commended.

Our conference concluded with a hymn festival centered on the texts of Isaac Watts at Friendship Baptist Church near downtown Atlanta. Worship flourishes in a climate of hospitality, and the good people of the congregation were truly delighted and honored to host us for the evening, which also included a banquet before the festival. While I—for whatever reason—was expecting the church to be an historic hundred-year-old structure, we gathered in a bright, airy sanctuary with a vibrant acoustic and substantial organ capable of leading the enthusiastic singing. Many members of the congregation were present for the event. A sixteen-voice choir embellished the congregation's song and were a welcome presence in guiding us through some of the repertoire. Jimmie Abbington presided both from the organ console as well as in the role of narrator, offering erudite information and commentary throughout the festival. Also assisting with the keyboard leadership was William Buthod. The vigor of the singing that evening will sustain many members until they have the chance to gather again in Detroit next year.

**Michael Silhavy, Editorial Advisory Board**

Hope to see you at our next Annual Conference, July 13–16, 2025, in Detroit, Michigan!



**Lisa Weaver**

# The Adopted, Adapted, and Integrated Hymnody of Isaac Watts in the Black Church

JAMES ABBINGTON, FHS

"Tradition is the living faith of the dead. Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name."

—Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition*

"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire." —Gustav Mahler

In her article titled "The Use and Performance of Hymnody, Spirituals, and Gospels in the Black Church," Portia Maultsby wrote in *The Papers of the Hymn Society* published in 1983:

Since the seventeenth century, enslaved Africans in America have participated in two culturally distinct religious traditions. The first tradition represents that associated with White Protestant denominations. The second was independently developed by Blacks, utilizing the concepts and practices retained from their West African heritage. These two traditions are easily distinguished by ideology, worship style, and musical practices. The musical repertoire of Black congregations that adhered to White Protestant doctrines is derived from official hymnals which include psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Conversely, the repertoire of churches, whose religious ideology is uniquely Black, consists of Black folk spirituals and gospels. Songs of these two idioms are derived from several sources: 1) West African musical traditions; 2) Black secular idioms; 3) original Black compositions; and 4) White Protestant psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.<sup>1</sup>

While the dominant musical forms found in the majority of autonomous Black churches mostly include contemporary gospel, praise and worship, and a very few spirituals, if any, white Protestant hymns continue to be mainstays of the repertoire in many traditional Black churches, especially those of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, and Fanny Crosby. These rich musical

treasures and theological miniatures have been adopted, adapted, and integrated in the immensely diverse music and worship traditions in the Black church. While many churches have completely abandoned and moved past the great hymn texts of Watts and Wesley, unfortunately they have not been replaced with an adequate or sufficient equivalent for these biblically-based, theologically astute, and culturally relevant gems. These hymns possess a lyrical theology that, for the Black church, has become their musical expression as a "rock in a weary land," a "shelter in the time of storm," and a "wheel in the middle of a wheel." The texts and the tunes still subsist as "anchors of faith," "shelters from the stormy blast," a "sure defense," expressions of praise and thanksgiving to the One who has "brought us thus far on the way." As the seasoned saints of the church now rest from their labors, unfortunately many of them have taken these songs with them to their graves. The oral transmission of this repertoire has declined over the years and now it is difficult to keep them alive and vibrant in most churches.

This paper will examine how the hymnody of Isaac Watts (or "Dr. Watts" as he is often referred to in the Black church) and the rich tradition of congregational song were adopted, adapted, and integrated into the music and worship of the Black church. Furthermore, this address will examine the hymnody by analyzing the unique details of Isaac Watts's compositional traits, theology, and practices. I intend to demonstrate how these musical characteristics have been *adopted*—or approved, accepted, endorsed, sanctioned, chosen—*adapted*—or enhanced, varied, hammered-out, shaped, and improvised—and *integrated*—or blended, woven into, merged, mingled, and infused—in the music and the worship of the Black church.

.....  
1. Portia K. Maultsby, "The Use and Performance of Hymnody, Spirituals, and Gospels in the Black Church" in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. James Abbingtion (GIA Publications, 2001), 77.

## Adopted: A History of Hymnody for Black Christianity

Historically, conversion to Christianity required a familiarity with the musical repertoire sung during religious activities. Therefore, psalm and hymn singing was *adopted* and included in the religious instruction given to enslaved Blacks. The English practice of “lining out” the texts and tunes was used to teach these songs to Blacks.<sup>2</sup> With a knowledge of psalms and hymns, enslaved Blacks were able to become active participants in a variety of religious activities at church and in the homes of their enslavers.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the singing of psalms and/or hymns was included early in the exclusively-Black religious assemblies. In one instance, a group of slaves living in Boston in 1693 agreed always to sing a psalm between two prayers during their Sunday worship.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, many Blacks were widely respected for their knowledge of psalms and hymn singing, and some could be found serving as singing-school masters for all-white participants in northern colonies.<sup>5</sup> Whether attending white churches or conducting their own services, Blacks were expected to sing songs from the established repertoire of Protestant hymnody according to prescribed musical norms. For this reason, northern Black folk were initially unable to develop a distinct body of religious music prior to the founding of independent Black churches.<sup>6</sup>

The following account, as given by Eileen Southern, is invaluable for understanding why the spiritual was gradually replaced by hymns of the Black churches:

During the 1730s, a new religious movement swept the (New England and Middle) colonies, the so-called “Great Awakening,” bringing with it a demand for the use of livelier music in the worship service. The “new” songs of the movement were hymns: for text they employed religious poems instead of the scriptural psalms. In 1707, Dr. Isaac Watts, an English minister and physician, published a book, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, which became immensely popular in the colonies, especially among the Black folks, because of the freshness and vitality of the words. In 1717, he published another collection of his attractive hymns, entitled *The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and Apply'd to the*

*Christian State and Worship*. Before long, people began to neglect the psalms, preferring to sing hymns instead, especially since the latter were fitted to lively tunes. Slowly, the various Protestant denominations in the colonies, one after the other, adopted the hymns of Watts. “The Era of Watts” in the history of American religious music had begun.<sup>7</sup>

The Black Methodists and Baptists endorsed Watts’s hymns, but the Baptists “blackened” them. They virtually threw out the meter signature and rhythm. By 1875, they had begun a new system altogether which was drastically different from the original hymns that were based on the style of singing coming from England to America in the eighteenth century. It was congregational singing much like the spiritual had been, in which primarily the text was retained. The melody would be sung in parallel intervals, fourths and fifths, sometimes thirds and sixths at cadence points, and they took a rather crudely shaped line which floated melismatically along, being held together primarily by the deacon who raised and lined it.<sup>8</sup> It was this kind of singing that white minister Charles A. Raymond wrote about in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1863, in his account titled, “The Religious Life of the Negro Slave.” In it, he observed the following about a service of worship:

In the churches of the cotton-growing states, the Negro deacon is no unimportant personage. He is a pastor without being a preacher; and is also the connecting official link between his Colored brethren in the church and their White associates. What the White pastor can never know, concerning the moral and social characters of the Colored flock, the Negro deacon can know. ... Nothing was more suggestive than a meeting for the election of a deacon. ... In meetings where business is to be transacted; the pastor is necessarily present. ... He ... calls upon the singers for a hymn, and the meeting is regularly organized. The usual devotional exercises, prayer, and singing occupy about half an hour. These are generally conducted by the Negroes—the pastor being a quiet participator in the worship.

What the gentleman did not make clear, but is nevertheless included in the practice, is that the devotional exercises which he described are conducted by the deacons. One need only visit some Black churches today, which are a bit more historic and traditional than those

2. Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals* (University of Illinois Press, 1977), 202.

3. Eileen Southern, ed., *The Music of Black Americans* (W. W. Norton, 1971), 33–42.

4. Robert Stevenson, *Protestant Church Music in America* (W. W. Norton, 1970), 93.

5. Stevenson, *Protestant Church Music*; Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 79–81.

6. Maultsby, “Use and Performance,” 79.

7. Southern, *Music of Black Americans*, 39–40.

8. Wendell P. Whalum, “Black Hymnody,” in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. James Abbingtion (GIA Publications, 2002), 174.

on the beaten path and in major urban cities, to discover the method outlined herein. Dr. Wendell Whalum expounds upon this method by stating:

In the service, i.e., after the devotions, hymns are sung faithful to the score. In lining, the deacon gives out two lines of the hymns at a time and then leads the congregation in singing. Though the congregation is used to the method and the text, they enjoy and follow this practice as it has been done in the past. When the deacon motions for the congregation to stand, it is understood that the current stanza will be the concluding one. Most of the hymns sung in this manner are hymns of Dr. Watts. A substantial number of Baptist churches have “Dr. Watts Choirs” as a regular part of their musical offering in divine worship services.<sup>9</sup>

## Adapted: Watts’s Hymnody in Black Religious Formation

Akin to Whalum’s insights, an oft neglected resource in American music scholarship is *Lining Out the Word: Dr. Watts Hymn Singing in the Music of Black Americans* by William T. Dargan.<sup>10</sup> This text is unique in that it is the first to take a close look at this important and rarely-studied component of African American music, one that has roots in Europe, but was adapted by African American congregations and went on to have a profound influence on music of all kinds, from gospel to soul to jazz. Dargan’s research illuminates a unique American music genre in a richly-textured narrative that stretches from Isaac Watts to Aretha Franklin and Ornette Coleman.

*Lining Out the Word* traces the history of the “lining out” of a hymn from the religious experiences of slavery, when African American slaves adapted the practice for their own uses, blending it with other music, such as work songs. Dargan explores the role of lining out in worship and pursues the cultural implications of this practice far beyond the limits of the church, showing how African American practitioners wove together African and European elements to produce a powerful and unique cultural and spiritual expression. Drawing from an extraordinary range of sources—including his own fieldwork and oral sources—Dargan offers a compelling new perspective on the emergence of African American religious music in the United States.

On the whole, Isaac Watts’s hymns have been more successful in the Black church than the hymns of Charles Wesley. Using the chronology of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) hymnals from 1892, 1941, 1954, and 1984 as a barometer, while the 1892 hymnal has forty-six hymns by Watts (out of 461), the 1984 hymnal retains thirty-six (out of 670). The imagery in Watts’s hymns has always had a particular favor with the Black worshipper. They were the principal hymns sung in the aforementioned lined tradition during the antebellum and post-antebellum eras—so such so that lined singing continues to be commonly known as the “Dr. Watts style,” even if the hymn was not written by Issac Watts. Some of the hymns most commonly misattributed to Watts are “A charge to keep I have,” “I heard the voice of Jesus say,” “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,” and “Father, I stretch my hand to thee.” During the “golden age of gospel,” ensembles like the Clara Ward Singers performed the Watts hymns in a gospel idiom alongside the gospel songs of Lucie E. Campbell, Thomas Dorsey, J. H. Brewster, and Kenneth Morris. The inclusion of Watts’s hymnody in these more popular music settings speaks to their longstanding power among Black Christians in the United States, and their efficacy in worship.

Compared to the hymns of Wesley and other evangelicals, Watts’s hymns more often seem to have particular signification for contemporary Black worshipers, but like those of Wesley, they also tend to have an eschatological or heavenward view which is generally pronounced in the closing stanza. Often commencing with a social theme, Watts’s hymns almost predictably take a Calvinistic excursus toward heaven (much like the climaxes of the Black folk preacher). Consequently, the Old Testament theology of God as liberator of the oppressed is severely dampened by the centrality of praise for the Sovereign Lord.<sup>11</sup>

The first hymnal compiled expressly for the use of a Black congregation was published in 1801. Titled *A Collection of Spiritual Songs and Hymns, Selected from Various Authors*, it was printed for Richard Allen, who is identified on the title page as “African Minister.”<sup>12</sup> Richard Allen is justly celebrated as the founder of the world’s first Black Christian denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which he served as its first bishop. He is also renowned for his civil rights activities in Philadelphia, but little attention has been given to his pioneering role in laying the foundation for Black American hymnody. The first edition of Allen’s hymnal contains fifty-four hymns; the second adds ten more

9. Whalum, “Black Hymnody,” 175.

10. William T. Dargan, *Lining Out the Word: Dr. Watts Hymn Singing in the Music of Black Americans* (University of California Press, 2006).

11. C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, “The Performed Word: Music and the Black Church,” in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. James Abbot (GIA Publications, 2001), 66–67.

12. Richard Allen, *A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (Philadelphia: T. L. Plowman, 1801).

texts, making a total of sixty-four. Some of the hymns were most certainly written by Allen himself, judging from their similarity to hymns he published in other places; others that bear all the earmarks of folk hymns may have been penned by Allen's church associates.<sup>13</sup>

Like many other hymnals of the time, Allen's hymnal belongs to the genre of the "pocket hymnal," measuring slightly larger than 5 by 3 inches in size. Also, like other contemporaneous hymnals, Allen's collection contains only texts, without author attributions or references to melodies that would be appropriate for use in singing the hymns. (Later editions of the AME hymnal would include such references). Eileen Southern traced twenty-six hymns to authors by locating concordances in eighteenth-century sources; thirteen of these hymns are found in the Table of Contents taken from Allen's *A Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1801):

"Am I a soldier of the cross"  
"Awake my heart, arise my tongue"  
"Come, let us lift our voices high"  
"Curst be the man, forever curst"  
"Earth has detain'd me pris'ner long"  
"Early my God, without delay"  
"How long shall death the tyrant reign"  
"Lord, what a wretched land is this"  
"My thoughts on awful subjects roll"  
"O, if my soul were form'd for woe"  
"There is a land of pure delight"  
"When I can read my title clear"  
"Why should we start and fear to die?"

While it may be assumed that Allen's congregation used the same tunes as did other congregations in singing the well-known hymns—such as those written by Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley—it seems obvious that in some instances the congregation of Bethel AME in Philadelphia (often called the "Bethelites") must have composed their own melodies or adapted popular street tunes for their purposes.

Another reason for the historic importance of Allen's hymnal is that it seems to have been the earliest one to include hymns in which "wandering" refrains and choruses are attached; that is, refrains freely used with any hymn rather than affixed permanently to specific hymns. Thus, Allen's hymnal became a primary

source of the worship song which later came to be called the "camp meeting hymn," and an early progenitor of the nineteenth-century gospel hymns. While the first decade of the century is notable for its publications of camp-meeting hymn collections, none are dated earlier than 1803—two years after Allen's hymnal was published.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not Black Methodists should be credited with inventing this form, as some contemporary sources imply, Allen's work certainly must be credited with being the first to *publish* any examples of the form.<sup>15</sup>

I want to draw specific attention to the fact that the term "spiritual song" in the titles of Allen's collections does not have the meaning at the time that it would later have when applied to the folk-composed Negro spiritual. Fine distinctions cannot easily be drawn between the hymn and the spiritual song in this period. Hymn compilers commonly used such titles as Allen used, as far back as 1651, with the edition of the Bay Psalm Book entitled *The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Old and New Testaments*, and Isaac Watts used the term in the title of his landmark publication of 1707, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, which was given an American edition in 1739. The three terms point back to the scripture in Colossians 3:16, wherein Christians are instructed to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." While initially drawing upon similar scriptures and texts, the early spiritual songs of Black American hymnody feature signature identifiers in both form and content. In the second edition of *Sing with Understanding*, Harry Eskew and Hugh McElrath offer a summary of the characteristics of Watts's hymn, noting that his hymns left their mark on the form and content of the English hymn for decades. They write:

Form:

It is simple: (a) in meter—only common, long, and short meter was used; (b) vocabulary—predominantly Anglo-Saxon words, with preference for monosyllables. (1) It is striking in its opening line, tersely proclaiming the theme of the entire hymn like a headline. (2) It is frequent in its use of repetition and parallelism, following the structural principle of the Psalms. (3) It is often half-rhymed with liberal use of imperfect rhymes or mere assonances. (4) It is dramatic in its climax, usually expressed in a final stanza.

13. Allen's autobiography, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labours of the Right Revend Richard Allen, Written by Himself and Published by His Request*, includes two hymns—"The God of Bethel Heard Her Cries" and "Ye Ministers That Are Called to Preaching"—and a third, entitled "Spiritual Song," is published in Dorothy Porter, *Early Negro Writing, 1760–1837* (Beacon Press, 1971), 559.

14. Eileen Southern, "Hymnals of the Black Church" in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. James Abbingtion (GIA Publications, 2001), 140–141.

15. See, for example, the excerpt from John Fanning Watson, *Methodist Error* (1819) reprinted in Eileen Southern, *Readings in Black American Music*, 2nd ed. (W. W. Norton, 1983), 63.

Content:

(1) It is comprehensive in scope and cosmic background.<sup>16</sup>  
(2) It is Calvinistic in theology: emphasis on doctrines dealing with the glory and sovereignty of God, the depravity of human nature, the security of the elect, and the all-sufficient atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of humankind. (3) It is Christian in focus: Christ exalted and adored above all else as the very center of worship. (4) It is liturgical in purpose: inspired by the setting of public worship and conceived for the use of the people of the congregation in public praise. (5) It is scriptural in flavor: faithfully paraphrasing Scripture and masterfully incorporating biblical language, allusion, and thought.<sup>17</sup>

Watts's integration of psalm paraphrase and verse based on his sermons using New Testament themes established the questionable precedent of "Christianizing" the psalms. His use of the psalms also led to the amalgam of psalmody and hymnody in collections of religious verse initiated by John Wesley in his *Charlestown Collection*, 1737, that became commonplace in the most evangelical hymnbooks.<sup>18</sup>

The form and content that Watts, among others, utilized was met with great acclaim, and supported by consistent use. Watts's 600 hymns were published in seven collections: *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1707; 1709); *Horae Lyricae* (1706; 1709); *The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament* (1719); and *Sermons with Hymns* (1721–27). Many of his hymns were composed in CM, SM, and LM, meters that his congregation on first hearing could sing to familiar psalm tunes and were often performed in the traditional lining-out style. Watts modeled his practice after that of seventeenth-century Anglican societies, stylizing the distinctive eighteenth-century evangelical interplaying between the "word preached" and the "word sung"—singing what is preached and preaching what is sung.<sup>19</sup> William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price comment on this blend in worship by noting:

Watts is called the Father of English Hymnody not because he vastly improved or reformed the hymns that were already being written in his day, nor because of

any radical change in form or structure. It is because he produced a "new song" based on the experiences, thought, feelings, and aspirations common to all Christians, expressed in what might be called classic objectivity. ... [He wrote hymns] that would illustrate, reinforce, and climax the pulpit. ... Sermon and hymn emerged together, but the hymn remains long after the sermon has been forgotten.<sup>20</sup>

The sermon, or more accurately the *preaching*, is the focal point of worship in the Black church, and all other activities find their place in some subsidiary relationship. In most Black churches, music, or more precisely *singing*, is second only to preaching as the magnet of attraction and the primary vehicle of spiritual transport for the worshiping congregation. In some of the more traditional churches, even the sermon (and often the prayers of the minister or deacons) are still "sung" in a kind of ritualistic cadence peculiar to the Black church.<sup>21</sup>

The unique nature of the Black church is perhaps most significantly analyzed by W. E. B. Du Bois, who once said, "Three things characterized this religion of the slave—the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy."<sup>22</sup> I quote Du Bois now, at length:

The preacher is the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a "boss", an intriguer, an idealist—all these he is, and ever, too, the center of a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number. The combination of a certain adroitness with deep-seated earnestness, of tact with consummate ability, gave him preeminence, and helps him maintain it. ...

The music of Negro religion is that plaintive, rhythmic melody with its touching minor cadences which, despite caricature and defilement, still remains the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American soil. Sprung from the African forests, where its counterpart can still be heard, it was adapted, changed, and intensified by the tragic soul-life of the slave until, under the stress of law and whip, it became the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair, and hope. ...

16. Watts was the "master of the enormous conception" (an Erik Routley phrase) who in wondering awe sang of the omnipotence of God, the spaciousness of nature, the vastness of time, and the dreadfulness of eternity.

17. Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath. *Sing with Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnody*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Church Street Press, 1995), 134–135.

18. Carlton R. Young. *My Great Redeemer's Praise: An Introduction to Christian Hymns* (OSL Publications, 1995), 55.

19. Robin A. Leaver, *Goostly Psalmes & Spirituall Songes: English and Dutch Metrical Psalms from Coverdale to Utenhove, 1535–1566* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 10.

20. William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price, *A Survey of Christian Hymnody* (Hope Publishing, 1987), 47–48.

21. For an analysis and examples of the sung sermon, see the fine study by Gerald L. Davis, *I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing it, You Know: A Study of the Performed African American Sermon* (PUBLICATION, DATE). The Word is performed and made alive not only in the preaching but also in the music.

22. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of the Faith of the Fathers," in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. James Abbingdon (GIA Publications, 2001), 4.

Finally, the frenzy, or “shouting” when the Spirit of the Lord passed by, and seizing the devotee, made him mad with supernatural joy, was the last essential of Negro religion and the one more devoutly believed in than all the rest. It varied in expression from the silent rapt countenance or the low murmur and moan to the mad abandon of physical fervor—the stamping, shrieking, and shouting, the rushing to and fro and wild waving of arms, the weeping and laughing, the vision and the trance. All this is nothing new in the world, but old as religion, as Delphi and Endor.<sup>23</sup>

It was the great service of Du Bois in his unforgettable chapter on the “Sorrow Song” in *The Souls of Black Folks* which gave music a serious and proper social interpretation. Henry Krehbiel later did the same in his *Afro-American Folksongs*, in which he gave the sorrow songs their most serious and adequate musical analysis and interpretation to date.<sup>24</sup> The humble origin of these sorrow songs is too indelibly stamped upon them to be ignored or overlooked. But underneath broken words, child-like imagery, and peasant simplicity, lies, as Du Bois pointed out, an epic intensity and a tragic profundity of emotional experience, for which the only historical analogy is the spiritual experience of the Jews, and the only analogue, the Psalms.<sup>25</sup>

Given their form, content, and scriptural resonances, it stands to reason that the hymns of Isaac Watts would find their way into the “canon” of Black church music. Those psalm-based hymns include ones such as “I love the Lord, he heard my cry” (Psalm 116), “O God, our help in ages past” (Psalm 90), and “Jesus shall reign” (Psalm 72). The most popular among Watts’s hymns in the Black Church canon include “Am I a soldier of the cross,” “Alas! and did my Savior bleed” (“At the Cross”), “Come, we that love the Lord” (“We’re Marching to Zion”), “From all that dwell below the skies,” “I sing the mighty power of God,” “Jesus shall reign,” “Joy to the world,” “When I survey the wondrous cross,” “Go, preach my gospel saith the Lord,” “When I can read my title clear,” and “Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove.” One of Isaac Watts’s most remarkable but lesser known hymns, which I was privileged to hear sung by a “Hymn Choir” in a small Black church in South Carolina, is “Go, worship at Immanuel’s feet.” This text employs fourteen images of Christ that convey the adoration and praise Emmanuel:

Go, worship at Immanuel’s feet,  
See in His face what wonders meet!  
Earth is too narrow to express  
His worth, His glory, or His grace.

The whole creation can afford  
But some faint shadows of my Lord;  
Nature, to make His beauties known,  
Must mingle colors not her own.

Is He compared to *wine or bread*?  
Dear Lord! our souls would thus be fed:  
That flesh, that dying blood of Thine,  
Is bread of life, is heav’nly wine.

Is He a *tree*? The world receives  
Salvation from His healing leaves:  
That righteous branch, that fruitful bough,  
Is David’s root and offspring, too.

Is He a *rose*? Not Sharon yields  
Such fragrancy in all her fields:  
Or if the lily He assume,  
The valleys bless the rich perfume.

Is He a *vine*? His heav’nly root  
Supplies the boughs with life and fruit:  
O let a lasting union join  
My soul the branch to Christ the vine!

Is He a *head*? Each member lives,  
And owns the vital powers He gives;  
The saints below and saints above,  
Joined by His Spirit and His love.

Is He a *fountain*? There I bathe,  
And heal the plague of sin and death:  
These waters all my soul renew,  
And cleanse my spotted garments, too.

Is He a *fire*? He’ll purge my dross;  
But the true gold sustains no loss:  
Like a refiner shall He sit,  
And tread the refuse with His feet.

Is He a *rock*? How firm He proves!  
The Rock of Ages never moves;  
Yet the sweet streams that from Him flow  
Attend us all the desert through.

Is He a *way*? He leads to God,  
The path is drawn in lines of blood;  
There would I walk with hope and zeal,  
Till I arrive at Sion’s hill.

Is He a *door*? I’ll enter in:  
Behold the pastures large and green;

23. Du Bois, “Of the Faith of the Fathers,” 4–5.

24. Henry Edward Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (G. Schirmer, 1914).

25. Alain Locke, “The Negro Spiritual,” in *The Works of Alain Locke*, ed. Charles Molesworth (Oxford University Press, 2012), 106.

A paradise divinely fair,  
None but the sheep have freedom there.

Is He designed the *cornerstone*,  
For men to build their Heav'n upon?  
I'll make Him my foundation, too,  
Nor fear the plots of hell below.

Is He a *temple*? I adore  
Th'indwelling majesty and power;  
And still to His most holy place,  
Whene'er I pray, I turn my face.

Is He a *star*? He breaks the night,  
Piercing the shades with dawning light;  
I know His glories from afar,  
I know the bright, the morning star.

Is He a *sun*? His beams are grace,  
His course is joy and righteousness;  
Nations rejoice when He appears  
To chase their clouds and dry their tears.

O let me climb those higher skies,  
Where storms and darkness never rise!  
There He displays His powers abroad,  
And shines and reigns th'incarnate God.

Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,  
Nor Heav'n His full resemblance bears;  
His beauties we can never trace  
Till we behold Him face to face.

The rich musical legacy of Watts has been explored in the decades since, particularly for his contribution to theology in music. In 1962, John Wesley Work, III, son and grandson of African American musicians, published a six-movement choral cycle titled "Isaac Watts Contemplates the Cross," published by Broadman Press in Nashville. Work was chairman of the department of music at Fisk University and served as director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers from 1947 to 1956. In this choral cycle, Work selected six Isaac Watts hymns: "When I survey the wondrous cross," "Alas! and did my Savior bleed," "Alas on that dark and doleful night," "How condescending and how kind," "Now for a tune of lofty praise," and "Hosanna to the Prince of light."

## Integrated: The Continued Legacy of Watts's Hymnody

Taken in the historical perspective, Isaac Watts was the single most important influence in giving the church an effective congregational song. He was not the creator or originator of the congregational hymn or hymn singing, and it is only in a restricted sense that he can be called the "Father of English Hymnody." He owed a great debt to others, but he far exceeded them. During his time, singing in congregational worship had sunk to a low level. Watts wrote:

While we sing the praises of God in his church, we are employed in that part which of all others is most akin to heaven, and it is a pity that they should be performed the worst upon earth...To see the dull indifference, the neglect and thoughtlessness air that sits upon the faces of a whole assembly while the psalm is on their lips, might even tempt a charitable observer to suspect the fervor of inward religion.<sup>26</sup>

He saw the need for change in congregational singing, and used every means in his power to enhance, enrich, and enliven it. It was his work and influence that ushered in the new epoch of sacred song in worship, which marked the transition from psalms alone to hymns, which made a permanent place for the hymn in worship, and which gave the congregational song the place it holds today. In these ways he created the standard of the best in hymnody in every generation since.<sup>27</sup> L. F. Benson sums up quite effectively the significance of Isaac Watts in the following short, but complete, summary:

He produced a whole cycle of religious song which his own ardent faith made devotional, which his manly and lucid mind made simple and strong, which his poetic feeling and craftsmanship made rhythmical and often lyrical, and which his sympathy with the people made hymnic. Probably the whole body of his work appealed alike to the people of his time, whose spiritual needs he so clearly apprehended. The larger part of his work proved to be an abiding enrichment of Church Song, and to many its only adequate expression. His best hymns remain permanently, after the winnowing of two centuries, among the classics of devotion.<sup>28</sup>

I conclude, as I began in the epigraph, by quoting Jaroslav Pelikan: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead.

26. Isaac Watts, "Preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*" in *Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs* (London: W. Baynes, 1817), 323.

27. Kenneth H. Cousland, "The Significance of Isaac Watts in the Development of Hymnody," *Church History* 17, no. 4 (1948): 296.

28. Louis F. Benson, *The English Hymn: Its Development and Use in Worship* (New York: George H. Doran, 1915), 206–207.

Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name.” Isaac Watts’s hymns certainly belong in the former category, the best of our tradition that demonstrates to us a living faith of our ancestors. His work continues to serve as a living musical monument of his deep faith and commitment to Christ. In his book *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, Douglas Bond declares:

Watts understood that “our passions are intensely directed toward material things but are hardly moved by the most important discoveries of *faith*.” He was warning against the stale lifeless singing in worship in his youth, and he rightly wanted to see emotion and passion, as we do, in sung worship. He knew that passions “are glorious and noble instruments of the spiritual life when under good conduct.” But here is where Watts is a counter voice to many well-meaning worship leaders today: he knew that passions “are ungovernable and mischievous energies when they so astray.” He grasped—and so must we—that it is the business of church leaders both to “assist the devout emotions” and “to guard against the abuse of them.”<sup>29</sup>

Bond continues by emphasizing Watts’s argument that “light comes before heat”:

Watts warned church leaders: “Let him not begin with their emotions. He must not artfully manipulate” their passions and feelings until he has first “set these doctrines before the eye of their understanding and reasoning faculties. The emotions are neither the guides to truth nor the judges of it.” He argued that since “light comes before heat, ... Christians are best prepared for the useful and pious exercise of their emotions in the spiritual life who have laid the foundations in an ordered knowledge of the things of God.”<sup>30</sup>

In the very best of Watts’s hymns, he combines emotion and knowledge. But for Watts, it is always *light first, then heat*.

The feeling of wonder, the emotion of profound gratitude, the escalating thrill of adoration and praise always follow the objective propositional exploration of the doctrines of the gospel. For Watts, the doxological always followed the theological. And the foundation of ordered knowledge of the things of God that must precede true doxology is essential for all Christians,

men and women, rich and poor, in all times and in all places, those with PhDs or GEDs, men from every tribe, kindred, people, and language. We know this not because Watts said so. Watts discovered it from divine revelation.<sup>31</sup>

Poetry in the Hebrew Bible can be deeply passionate, even erotic, and the psalms are rich with thrilling emotion, but it is always *light first, then heat*. Surely this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote, “I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also” (1 Corinthians 14:15).

One simple fact is sure: when Isaac Watts was born, scarcely a hymn was sung in church; when he died seventy-four years later, having written over 600 hymns, the floodgates of church praise had been flung wide open, and Watts’s hymns have been adopted, adapted, and integrated in the worship of the Black church ever since. They have been an essential musical reservoir for the Black church and continue to provide the texts and tunes for the church to express its faith, hope, and spirituality. Watts’s hymns remain as survival tools, providing through his texts the will to persevere, even amid cruel and inhumane conditions. Preachers often use the poetics of Watts’s hymnody to express what mere words simply cannot say. They know that one of the best ways to move a congregation to embrace the message is a word fittingly spoken to them through some well-worn, beloved hymns. Cleophus LaRue comments, “It is as if the congregation is saying in its audible response to the hymn, ‘Yes, preacher, this song helps us to drink from the fountain of the familiar. Our testimonies are wrapped up in the words of that hymn. We have been this way before and we know exactly where you are going.’”<sup>32</sup> Certainly, Isaac Watts’s faith and stewardship of the hymns have been deep wells for the Black church, helping us to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land.

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29. Douglas Bond, *The Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts* (Ligonier Ministries, 2013), 135.

30. Bond, *Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, 135.

31. Bond, *Poetic Wonder of Isaac Watts*, 135.

32. Cleophus J. LaRue, “Introduction to Power in the Pulpit: How America’s Most Effective Preachers Prepare Their Sermons,” in *Readings in African American Church Music and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. James Abbingtion (GIA Publications, 2001), 347.

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# Bands of Mercy: Merciful Hymnody for Child and Beast

ALISA CLAPP-ITNYRE

Should Christians care about the treatment of animals? The Animal Welfare Movement of the nineteenth century believed so and promoted religious songs and stories in its campaigns against the cruelty of animals. Even children were enlisted through a highly popular international organization, the Bands of Mercy. Through close analysis of the Bands of Mercy's songs and hymns, I demonstrate an era when animal rights closely aligned with theological priorities.

As part of the great Christian philanthropic movements that swept Victorian England, one of immense impact is yet largely forgotten today: the Bands of Mercy movement to engage children in caring for God's creatures.<sup>1</sup> This came out of the larger Animal Welfare movement represented by the formation of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (the RSPCA) established in 1824.<sup>2</sup> Catherine Smithies, involved in the movement as a Methodist social activist, began the first band in 1875 in Wood Green, Middlesex, England, imitating the Bands of Hope for children of the



*The Bands of Mercy  
hold an important  
place in animal-  
rights history,  
childhood studies, and  
Christian teachings.*

.....

1. The few published works to discuss the Bands of Mercy include Monica Flegal, "'How Does Your Collar Suit Me?' The Human Animal in the RSPCA's *Animal World* and *Band of Mercy*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40, no. 1 (2012): 247–62 (she is critical of the journals for demeaning both animals and children); Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, "Reforming Society: Missionary, Bands of Hope, and Bands of Mercy Hymns" in *British Hymn Books for Children: Re-Tuning the History of Childhood* (Ashgate/Routledge, 2016), (focused on various publications with hymns); Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, "Advocating for the Least of These: Empowering Children and Animals in *The Band of Mercy Advocate*," in *Animals and Their Children in Victorian Culture*, ed. Brenda Ayres and Sarah E. Maier (Routledge, 2019), 87–105 (focused on the inaugural volume); and Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, "Bands of Mercy Music: A Cultural Study of Victorian Animal Welfare Songs for Children," in *Reading Texts in Music and Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Phyllis Weliver and Katharine Ellis (forthcoming 2025), (focused on the music of the movement). Janet M. Davis, in *The Gospel of Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2016), while not devoting an entire chapter to the Bands of Mercy, does discuss them in the US, especially their connection with Civil Rights.

2. Among many histories of the animal rights movement and contributions to Animal Studies, see James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); James Serpell, *In the Company of Animals* (Basil Blackwell, 1986); Andrew N. Rowen, ed., *Animals and People Sharing the World* (University Press of New England, 1988); Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New Press, 2017); and Hilary Thompson, *Novel Creatures: Animal Life and the New Millennium* (Routledge, 2018). Of Victorian animal-studies scholarship, see Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Harvard University Press, 1987); Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay, eds., *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Ashgate, 2007); and Laurence W. Mazzeno and Ronald D. Morrison, eds., *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture: Contexts for Criticism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), among many others. None of these books mentions the Bands of Mercy organization nor gives much attention to Christian support of the movement.

temperance movement begun several decades earlier. Smithies's idea was to bring children humane education about wildlife and domestic animals through stories, songs, and pledges shared at weekly meetings (see Appendix 1). The idea quickly ignited across the United Kingdom and then across the ocean to America: there were 800 Bands in the UK by 1892,<sup>3</sup> and over 27,000 Bands in the United States by the early 1900s.<sup>4</sup> In 1879, Smithies's son, Thomas Bywater Smithies, a publisher of various socially focused periodicals, founded a journal to augment the movement, *The Band of Mercy Advocate*. In 1884, due to his ill health and other reasons, the organization was taken over by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) which changed the journal's name simply to *The Band of Mercy*, and which ran uninterrupted until 1935. Especially in its early years under Smithies's leadership, the journal yoked religion with animal welfare and with song. For example, he established the convention to end every monthly issue of the journal with a song score, and often these had a religious message (so a "hymn" in that sense).<sup>5</sup>

Grounded in Christian ideals of mercy, kindness, and the prevention of suffering, the Bands of Mercy hold an important place in animal-rights history, childhood studies, and Christian teachings. The movement is, in fact, a startling reminder that nineteenth-century Christians' moral generosity extended to the animal species as they advocated for "the least of these." Both generally marginalized in secular society, animals and children were, in this context, now acknowledged as having God-given rights and God-given empowerment, respectively, in groundbreaking ways. I will demonstrate

in this paper that these ideals were especially promoted in the hymns and songs of the movement; I will examine several dozen written for the early movement (see Appendix 2) as examples of potent songs and hymns in aligning Christian ideals with animal compassion and child value, a perhaps unrecognized focus of nineteenth-century Christian theology, which is still sorely needed today.

## "God Made Them All": Christian Advocacy for Animals and Children

Thomas Bywater Smithies was a man of the church—"a rigid Sabbatarian, a Wesleyan Methodist, and a teetotaler, as well as a humanitarian" (V.66)<sup>6</sup>—who founded the journal *The Band of Mercy Advocate* to support the work of "his beloved mother" Catherine Smithies (V.67) to amplify her work with the Bands. Upon his death in 1883, the RSPCA editing team wrote the following in tribute to him (in the September 1883 issue): "His amiability and charity were conspicuous, for it may be said that he always abounded in the love of God and man and animals. It is impossible to give the reader any adequate idea of the valuable aid rendered by Mr. Smithies to the cause of religion" and it listed the many socially focused, Christian publications he founded, including *British Workman*, *Band of Hope Review*, and the *Children's Friend* (V.67).

As an outgrowth of the Smithies's Methodism and the ties the animal welfare movement had with organized

3. Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815–1872* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 129.

4. According to "Be Kind: A Visual History of Humane Education, 1880–1945," accessed June 21, 2024, <https://bekindexhibit.org>, George T. Angell and Rev. Thomas Timmins established the American Band of Mercy societies in the United States in 1882, and thousands of Bands quickly formed across the country. For example, there existed three Bands out of Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana, my current residence, and a newspaper clipping about one, from the *Richmond Palladium-Item* of 1902, states that there were then over 50,000 Bands and 2 million child-members across the United States.

5. I am grateful to my colleague in the UK, Chris Hines, who is finding and purchasing all available volumes of *The Band of Mercy* and who is granting me permission to publish images from his collection. We are working on a book-length study of the Bands of Mercy movement as a forgotten social campaign in Anglo-American history.

6. Volume V, page 66. As all year-long volumes used continuous pagination, these citations will be used henceforth.

religion,<sup>7</sup> Christian ideologies proliferated throughout the pages of *The Band of Mercy Advocate*. For example, Christian values of love and kindness undergird directives to animal welfare in various poems (“Be Kind” and “Our Father Made Them All” [I.3]; “God Made Them All” [I.18]; and “God Made All Things” [I.19]). Engravings boast maxims from Scripture, like “All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee, O Lord!” and “Blessed Are the Merciful” (I.52). Clergy were often behind the establishment of new Bands and were speakers at them; furthermore, they constitute many of the authors of articles in *The Advocate*. One series, “Catechism on Humanity to Animals,” is “by a Clergyman” and engages children’s (supposed) queries in a question-answer format, most answers by him coming from Scripture. For example, to the question, should a “Christian man be kind to his horse?” he replies, “He will; for the Word of God tells us, as written in the Book of Proverbs XII, verse 10: ‘A righteous man regarded the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel!’” (I.58). The clergyman takes lessons from the covenant between God and the animals (Genesis 9:10); the command not to muzzle the ox (Deuteronomy 25:4); and the New Testament reference to Jesus as “the Lamb.” He refers to other clergy’s indictments of animal cruelty, and even brings science into the discussion on whether animals feel pain, clearly showing post-Darwinian awareness: “Acutely so; for as all sensation is performed by the nerves ... the sense of feeling is dispersed throughout every part” of the animal (I.59). He ends with this prayer from “our English poet” (William Cowper):

But many a crime, deemed innocent on earth,  
Is registered in heaven; and these, no doubt,  
Have each their record, with a curse annexed.  
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,  
But God will never. (I. 59).

.....

7. Animal welfare often united with other church-sponsored activism, seen in the abstinence and vegetarian principles of the Bible Christian Church, for example. Also, the American Women’s Christian Temperance Union joined forces with antivivisection groups in the 1880s to fight experimental physiology; Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, 93. Animal welfare and temperance often rallied under the same songs, such as “Dare to Do Right”; the *Band of Mercy Advocate* Vol. 3, includes the temperance song, “The Water-Drinkers” as melody No. 31. Many Bands of Mercy worked with Bands of Hope, as in Birmingham (V.31).

8. The Great Chain of Being was a concept originating from Plato and Aristotle merely to organize nature, but it was used widely by medieval Christians to prioritize the value of lifeforms, imagining God heading a hierarchy with humans right below the angels and well ahead of the various animals, with plant forms, then inanimate minerals, on the lowest rungs.

9. C. E. Symonds, *Outline Lessons for Bands of Mercy, Suitable for Sunday School or Home Teaching* (Skeffington, 1907), 9 (my italics).

It is a powerful and indicative reinterpretation of Cowper by late-century Bands’ ideologies: that animals have worth in the Kingdom, and that God will judge cruelty against them as “a crime.” These views fly in the face of centuries of Christian belief in the “Great Chain of Being”<sup>8</sup> where animals are much lower in the hierarchy of living beings—and thus available to human usage—as ordained by God. By 1907, a Band of Mercy author put this new world-thinking succinctly: “It should be distinctly understood that we desire to teach a great deal more than mere kindness to animals. We wish to insist upon justice towards them, not as a thing by itself, but as an essential part of a religious and moral life.”<sup>9</sup>

A second important point to make regarding the Bands of Mercy: children are honored in a similar fashion to animal subjects. Both were undervalued and vulnerable in society but honored by Band ideology. Thus, even though adults organized Bands and Band activities, these activities were yet child focused, engaging children’s active thinking and physical activity, quite different from staid school or Sunday-school sessions. While being educated by adult lectures and entertained by magic-lantern shows, for example, children were also actively involved, writing essays and reading them aloud during meetings. Plays were written for children to enact (e.g., “Children’s Chat” [II.14-15]) and some of their stories and poems were printed in the volumes (e.g., “The Frog, by a Little Girl, Aged Eleven Years” [II.34]). Lessons in the first volumes focused on “A Child’s Questioning” (I.18), on children’s answered prayers for sick animals (“God Made the Birds” [II.11]), and insisted upon “Little Children’s Work” (I.82). When the RSPCA took over the journal in 1883, they instituted an occasional series, “What Even a Child Can Do,” the first one about Kate Johnson who refused to ride in any carriages whose horses were in bearing reins (horribly destructive restraints on horses’ necks later decried by Anna Sewall

in *Black Beauty* [1877]). Of course, children could also be the cause of animal fatalities and suffering, and so the stories and words of warning throughout the *Bands of Mercy* volumes were specifically for them too.

But it was especially in Bands' songs, I would argue, that powerful religious ideology and child empowerment best came together, giving children a true "voice" for the "dumb animals" around them. Indeed, singing was a mainstay at every meeting and also a very public educational-political tool in the community, and thus the Band of Mercy hymns and songs undergirded the movement. The "News Columns" added to the 1883 volume and thereafter, in which Bands' secretaries share their news, are transparent about singing making up the crux of activity and enjoyment during Bands' meetings. But Catherine Smithies deemed singing an essential part from the start, as made clear in Rule # 7 for Bands: "Monthly or Quarterly meetings will, if practicable, be held, at which addresses will be given and appropriate hymns or melodies sung" (I.7; see Appendix 1). *Bands of Mercy Advocate* monthly issues ended with a full score of a hymn or song; then, after the first three years, Thomas Smithies gathered all thirty-six songs together in *Band of Mercy Melodies* (ca. 1881) "in a collective form for the use of conductors of Band of Mercy meeting and other gatherings for promoting amongst the young the practice of kindness to animals" (v), acknowledging that several had already become quite popular (vi).<sup>10</sup> Though some song tunes appear to be composed by hire—a G. W. Martin and T. Crampton wrote many—some were written by already established hymn composers, such as Philip Bliss and Henry Gauntlett. The songs were sung at meetings, but also for marches down city streets (see IV.71; VIII.79; XIII.55, 79), using songs like the "Band of Mercy Marching Song." When sung to each other, children learned; when sung to the public, adult ideologies changed. In fact, though bands would be small at first, from 20 to 40 children, they could grow immensely large,

some being reported in the hundreds (e.g., 448 children in the Doncaster Band by 1883 [V:15]) and thus creating immense public display.

Examining three areas—hymns, humane songs, and songs honoring animal lives—helps us appreciate the powerful ideologies disseminated amongst children and more widely to society as the Bands of Mercy were first becoming established in 1879–1881, refocusing Christian ideals upon animal compassion.

## “In Our Father’s Care”: Hymns for and from God’s Creatures

A first category of these songs would be the “hymn,” songs which sing of God and Christian ideals. For example, “The Helpless Lamb” (No. 7,<sup>11</sup> words by S. W. Partridge, music by G. W. Martin) may open with a focus on the “little lamb, so young and fair ... What, in danger, could you do?” (v. 1), but the accompanying engraving of a Victorian-era shepherd watching the flock and a church steeple beyond make clear the religious connotations (see Figure 1<sup>12</sup>). By the third verse, Christ as Shepherd is richly presented:

Yet your shepherd’s hand and eye,  
Ev’ry want can well supply;  
At his side you need not fear,  
Danger cannot reach you there.  
I am weak, poor lamb, like you,  
Need a guardian shepherd too;  
That Good Shepherd, Jesus, need,  
Or I shall be weak indeed.

The literal shepherd is offered to the lamb at whose side “danger cannot reach you,” but by the third line, the focus is switched to the child singers who own their

10. Other songbooks of the movement included *Band of Mercy Song-Book, for Junior and Senior Bands* (London: S. W. Partridge, n.d.); George T. Angell and Rev. Thomas Timmons, eds., *Band of Mercy Melodies* (Boston: American Humane Education Society, n.d.); *Hymns for Children ... with Songs and Hymns for Bands of Mercy and of Hope* (London: Sunday School Association, 1894); and Sarah J. Eddy, *Songs of Happy Life* (Providence, RI: Art and Nature Study Publ. Co, 1897). To read more about and to hear songs in the latter, see Clapp-Itnyre, “Reforming Society,” and recorded songs on Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, “Sounding Childhood,” accessed June 21, 2024, <https://soundingchildhood.org/>.

11. Numbers are those affixed to the songs in both the *Advocate* volumes and in the *Melodies* book. Starred (\*) songs can be heard on my academic website, [soundingchildhood.org](https://soundingchildhood.org/), by two local children’s Bands-choirs I organized in 2019 and 2020 to learn some of these songs.

12. In Volume I (1879), Issue 7 (July). Volumes are owned by Chris Hines, who has given permission for the reproduction of these images.

Figure 1: “The Helpless Lamb”



own weakness and need for the Good Shepherd. In the final verse, the song’s theme reminds the audience of the Christian moral:

May He, ever at my side,  
Be my Wisdom, Guard, and Guide;  
May He aid my weakness still,  
Keep me from each threatening ill.

Rhyming couplets and internal rhymes give flow and lightness to the verses’ tune while alliteration of hard consonants (e.g., G) augment a drill-like musical refrain and give energy to this children’s hymn.

Other times, though, animals claim God’s protection as hymns lean on scriptural teachings, as with “Only a Little Sparrow” (No. 9, words anonymous, tune by P. P. Bliss). Rendered by Bliss’s delightful, bird-like tune in 6/8, the hymn is told in first person from the bird, as he witnesses to God’s safeguard: “He watches over my slumber, / And harm can’t come to me” (v. 3). Indeed, many of these songs come from birds’ perspectives, not surprising since birds sing and so it was a natural extension to have children voice them in their songs. The chorus gives a summation of the Christian theme to human singers alike:

Only a little sparrow, counted of low degree;  
Taking no thought of the morrow,  
For the dear Lord careth for me.

This verse alludes to scripture, of God’s care “even” for the tiny sparrow: “not one [sparrow] is forgotten by God” (Luke 12:6; see also Matthew 6:26). If the scripture comforts humans with God’s care, it also affirms God’s care for the smallest of birds.

In “The Snow-Bird’s Song” (No. 12), birds speak in first person to share their innate knowledge of God. When young girls see birds outside their window in the winter’s cold and wish to bring them inside and dress them in “a nice little frock, and a hat if he choose” (v. 3), the bird speaks the moral in the final verse:

“There’s One, my dear child, though I cannot tell who,  
Has clothed me already, and warm enough too.” (v. 4)

The music of the gospel composer Philip Phillips lends a “bird-like” charm through eighth-note chromatic scales and high C5 “chirping” in the Chorus.<sup>13</sup> A similar theme is shared in “In the Cold the Robin Comes” (No. 25, music by T. Crampton): “That when all the world is dim, / [It] Somehow knows some Being large / Has his little life in charge / Caring for his little frame” (v. 2). It is the human child who can name the caregiver, end the rhyme, and conclude the melodic line: “As for us who know His name” (v. 2).

13. Phillips’s tune (no doubt from his larger repertoire and not written specifically for this text) has marked similarities to Charles H. Gabriel’s tune to Civilla D. Martin’s 1905 “His Eye Is on the Sparrow,” a hymn clearly inspired by Bands’ songs of a decade earlier.

Figure 2: "The Ass"

"Hand of Mercy" Melodica—No. 11.

**THE ASS.**

Words by S. W. PARTRIDGE. Music by G. W. MARTIN.

1. The Donkey feels a - long the road, And drags with pain a - heavy load For  
 2. Poor Ass! he has his own pleasure Of his and his a - free to bear Of  
 3. They call him ass, put, yet, for shame It would be bet - ter if some man were  
 4. And then his un - rest of - fers, too, His cry - at man's will to do.—Omn

1. his un - fed ing mas - ter, For his un - fed - ing mas - ter, Who for - the re - turn he - comes His hands at kicks and  
 2. blows and star - ve - face Of his low and star - ve - face Of his low and star - ve - face Of his low and star - ve - face  
 3. on - ly half as hum - ble, Were on - ly half as hum - ble; if some - one would like him to be, And, though ill - treated,  
 4. not this too, he gives us, Does not this too, he gives us, When we so could. Oh, for - my will For - form our heavenly

1. ex - el - lence To urge him onward fast - er, To urge him onward fast - er, So humble, patient, meek, and low, His  
 2. well - done, And mark his hum - ble sta - tion, And mark his hum - ble sta - tion, That on his patient back we see The  
 3. scorned, & poor, Forbear to rail and gram - ble, For - bear to rail and gram - ble, And if he's dull he's most ful - ful Of  
 4. Master's will, Who does so true - ly love us, Who does so true - ly love us? The humbling thus from one to learn Whom

1. master seems the greater lord, And counts his human gr - ces, And counts his human gr - ces; Met - links—though 'twould be  
 2. cross—a mark of dig - ni - ty, There once the Saviour rode, These once the Saviour rode; And which may teach a  
 3. what sometimes we all forget—Who feeds him day by day, Who feeds him day by day, The hand that feeds him  
 4. as a teacher must would spare, But there is need, a - las! But there is need, a - las! And if the truth be

*Rall.*

1. un - der - stand - ing—The ass should drive, the man o - bey, And take each o - ther's place, And let each o - ther's place  
 2. scornful mind That on the meanest we shall find Some hon - or is be - stowed, Some hon - or is be - stowed.  
 3. food sup - plies him, ne - ver fails to re - cog - nise, And fol - low and o - bey, And fol - low and o - bey.  
 4. not a - min, We'll care not who the teacher is, Though but an hum - ble Ass, Though but an hum - ble Ass.

London: Published monthly by S. W. PARTRIDGE & Co., at the Office, No. 9, Paternoster Row.  
 Printed by Geo. Watson & Co., at Charles Street, Farringdon Road.

Another example takes "The Ass" (No. 11, words by S. W. Partridge, music by G. W. Martin) as both a potent symbol of human cruelty and an animal's honorable servitude (see Figure 2<sup>14</sup>). The ass gets nothing from his "unfeeling master" but "brutal kicks and blows" yet his own "humble, patient, meek, and mute" (v. 1) attitude takes on Christian symbolism:

But on his patient back we see  
 The cross—a mark of dignity,  
 There once the Saviour rode,  
 There once the Saviour rode;  
 And which may teach a scornful mind  
 That on the meanest we shall find  
 Some honor is bestowed,  
 Some honor is bestowed.

Even in the donkey's humble efforts to do his master's bidding, humans can learn to "perform our heavenly Master's will" (v. 4). It is an unusual, though fitting, topic to use the donkey—who traditionally carried both Mary and Jesus on his back—to teach many lessons, from human cruelty to animal humility in which the animal now takes on attributes of Christ. Martin's melody emphasizes the plodding nature of the donkey in the first melodic line of moving eighth notes, with the Christian message in the next lines emphasized with repeated D5 notes ("So humble, meek, and mute) and repeated melodic phrases ("There once the Saviour rode," etc.).

In an even more blatant look at human mistreatment of God's creation, "Cruelty" (No. 16, words by S. W. Partridge, music by G. W. Martin) has the child's voice directly acknowledge their own horrible acts to small and large creatures, reminding us that these creatures were all made by God:

Why should my cruel hands destroy  
 What God was pleased to form.  
 Or torture, with malicious joy,  
 The unoffending worm?  
 For worms were formed by that same Power  
 That made both me and you,  
 And He who keeps us Ev'ry hour  
 Sustains the insect too. (v. 1)

The verses continue:

He in His wisdom gave them birth,  
 The mighty and the small,  
 And in this vast capacious earth,  
 Gives room enough for all.  
 Then let them live and happy be,  
 And praise their Maker still,  
 And through earth's num'rous family  
 Be kindness and goodwill. (v. 2)

It is a very modern-feeling hymn acknowledging every creature's right to be left alone to live and roam, even to "praise their Maker." And it emphasizes children in the work: in a slower, quarter-note/half-note ascending chorus, begun by the lower voices in the bass

14. In Volume I (1879), Issue II (November).

clef, then joined by the higher voices, children sing (v. 2): “But children of a better mind, who love and fear the Lord, / Will be more merciful and kind, And hold the sin abhorred.”

It is significant that the final song of the *Melodies* collection, and of Volume 3, is a hymn entitled “Our Father’s Care” (No. 36, words by D. L., music by F. Peel). In third person, the line implores children to work: to give the sparrows “crumbs and give them seed / Let the hungry sparrows feed.” In response, children then sing the last phrase directly to the birds and with an engaging melodic phrase (intervals of a third, then a fourth) to emphasize, “Welcome, sparrows, to our home!” (v. 1). The final verse gives Christian comfort to both creature and child, as the “you” fluidly refers to both:

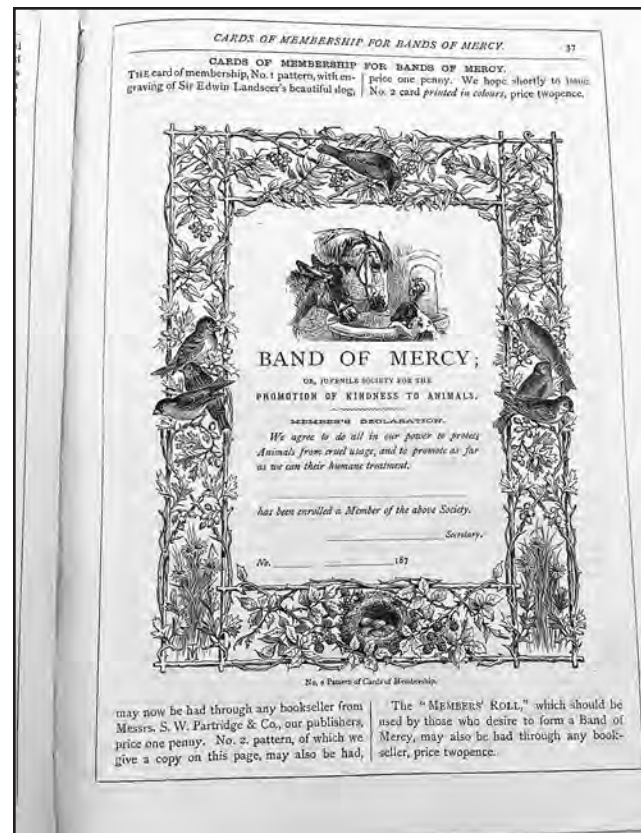
So dear children have a Friend,  
To their wants He does attend;  
Though you cannot see Him nigh,  
Still He watches you on high.  
Though no creature can express  
His kind care and tenderness,  
Still you are, by day and night,  
in your Heav’nly Father’s sight.

Similar themes were also explored in an article series of the later *Bands of Mercy*, “Dumb Creatures.” This term, now avoided for its demeaning connotation, then served to remind singers that creatures cannot speak, but in a progressive move, language in many of these songs emphasizes that this does not diminish their worth or keep them out of their “Heav’nly Father’s sight” and protection. Instead, it gives more urgency for children to speak—and sing hymns—for the non-human, non-speaking creatures around them.

## “Would you like some bread?” Humane Songs of Caring for God’s Creatures

Other songs take these Christian ideals as a jumping-off point to the kind treatment of animals without religious context. The pledge all Bands members made

Figure 3: Cards of Membership for Bands of Mercy



was: “We agree to do all in our power to protect animals from cruel usage, and to promote as far as we can their humane treatment” (see Figure 3<sup>15</sup>). Songs support this mission. And often the songs come from the animals themselves as told in first person. Very often they are birds: in fact, the very first song to be printed is “The Sparrows’ Petition” (No. 1, words anonymous, music by T. Crampton):

In those snug little cottages  
that you have placed among the trees.  
We all were hatched, and so, you see,  
Are members of the family.  
Hunger and frost are hard to bear;  
so boys and girls of Chester square,  
Just throw us out a crumb or two,  
and as you would be done by, do. (v. 2)

15. In Volume I (1879), Issue 5 (May).

The tune is almost exclusively made of an eighth-and-quarter-note unit to mimic, perhaps, the hopping of birds. But the anthropomorphic reminders of the birds' rights to be cared are found in the lyrics—that they are “of the family”—and break down the spaces (outdoor/indoor) between the birds and the children; further, the children have literally become the birds by singing of “we.” The Christian message is only indirectly given through allusion to the Lord’s commandment, “As you would be done by, do” (“do to others as you would have them do unto you” Luke 6:31).

Birds appeal for intervention; they also appeal to be left alone. In “The Bird’s Nest” (No. 5, words anonymous, music by G. W. Martin) singers intone a doleful “Will you take the nest away? ... Think how she will moan” in repeated F4-E4 agitation; then sweeping phrases from D5 down to G4 reflect her flight as “she has only flown for food,” sadly to return in despair “when she finds her darlings gone” (v. 1). The tune and text ask singers to imagine themselves as the “other” who now has a life spirit and ability to mourn. The accompanying engraving of a young child looking thoughtfully upon a nest of baby birds emphasizes the child-thought to which this song appeals (see Figure 4<sup>16</sup>). In “The Bird’s Petition” (No. 3, words by S. W. Partridge, music by G. W. Martin), the bird now pitifully appeals to “my little boy” in first person to “not rob my nest,” a common pastime for little boys of the era. Again, using musical emphasis (A to a G# on “gentle” and “you would”) and anthropomorphic arguments to view the bird life like the human, the bird sings:

Think, gentle boy, what you would feel,  
and your dear mother too.  
If to your bed some thief should steal,  
and hurry off with you. ...  
For you indeed must cruel be  
If you would do us harm. (3x)(v. 2)

As the refrain emphasizes the harm the boy will do, not once, but three times, the bird has the final, didactic word: “If you would do us harm.”

Figure 4: “The Bird’s Nest”



Other creatures’ lives are appealed to in these songs as well, such as “The Spider” (No. 23,\* words by John Saffery, music by T. Crampton) (see Figure 5<sup>17</sup>):

Oh, go, thou little spider, travel bravely on thy way;  
The world is surely large enough for you and me today.  
The impulse of a moment would deprive thee of thy life,  
And monster hands too swiftly crush  
thy frame with beauty rife. (v. 1)

It also comments on how “wondrous are thy life and ways, and wondrously devised. / Go, spin gossamer, to float upon the air” (v. 2); using the formal “thy” pronoun, often reserved for God, further emphasizes the spider’s significance. The tune is composed of eighth notes moving up and down the scale like a spider

16. In Volume 1 (1879), Issue 5 (May).

17. In Volume 2 (1880), Issue 23 (October).

Figure 5: “The Spider”



moving amongst its web. Both it and the text honor the unrecognized “beauty” and “ways” of the spider and its right simply to live and spin, the song flipping the Great Chain of Being on end with humans now the unchristian “monster” who kill and maim.

Finally, children use their own voices and actions to offer aid to the animals. “The Dicky-Birds” (No. 14, music by T. E. Perkins) once again focuses on the birds of winter, the child-singers asking, “I should think you’d fly away Where the weather’s warm” (v. 1) but they then offer life-sustaining food as chronicled in the third and fourth verses:

Hungry little dicky-birds, Would you like some bread?  
I will give you all you want, Or some seeds instead.  
Anything you like to eat, You shall have it free,  
Ev’ry morning, Ev’ry night, If you’ll come to me. (v. 3)

The chorus, in lively falling quarter notes, emphasizes the outreach that even little children can provide: “Dicky birds, dicky birds, Pretty dicky birds, / Don’t you want some crumbs to eat, Pretty dicky birds?”

Children are also shown (a boy in a silhouette illustration) and described giving sustenance to the donkeys in “Feeding Neddy” (No. 28,\* music by T. Crampton): “Come here, Master Neddy, Your breakfast is ready” (v. 1). Neddy must work for a living (“I’ve work for you, Neddy,” v. 2). As with many of these humane songs, this one reminds singers of animal welfare placed in an appealing tune in 3/8 with lively eighth notes throughout gives vital messaging in an engaging melodic frame.

## “Be Kind”: Songs Honoring Animals and Kindness to All

Finally, godly conduct and species-harmony are honored in these hymn-songs. After all, Article VIII of the Band is that “all the members ... will avoid the use of all angry or harsh words to one another” (I.7). In a later (1890) volume, “Our News Column” reports that a mother of members was delighted that her children were “not only kinder to animals, but were kinder and more gentle to one another” (XII.79), truly a goal of the movement. All creatures—human and non-human—need a gentle touch, a theme which emanates in the journal’s stories and songs. For example, in “Master Doggie” (No. 8, words anonymous) the dog himself must learn to be kind to the family bird: “Would you take that piece of biscuit / From the pretty Cockatoo?” Accompanied by an engaging tune by Henry Gauntlett and a charming engraving by Sir Edwin Landseer “painted for the Queen” herself and used “by permission,” Thomas Smithies spared no expense in presenting an appealing song to children who must have thoroughly enjoyed both tune and image (see Figure 6 <sup>18</sup>).

Often the message of songs gives important reminders of the value of dogs and other animals to work against degrading stereotypes, as with “Poor Fido” (No. 10) whose rescue by “our Tom” elicits a series of concerns from family members: “He’ll bring...into the hall the bones he gnaws; / Jump up against my satin gown,

18. In Volume I (1879), Issue 8 (August).

Figure 6: “Master Doggie”



and soil it with his dirty paws,” worries Grandma (v. 2). However, by the end, all have learned a lesson:

For Grandpa says, “In his still way  
This small dog preaches every day,  
By teaching us that gentle ways  
Turn foes to friends, and blame to praise.” (v. 6)

“The Cat and the Dog” (No. 35, words by John Saffery, music by T. Crampton) also tackles stereotypical behaviors to extract a lesson: cat, dog, and young boy meet in the street and everyone expects a “fray” against the cat, but the dog is “polite for his species” while the boy was of “good feeling and kindness”—“No creature will injure, but pleasure impart” (v. 2). All learn a lesson in kindness to each other.

In a sad reminder of the ways of life, “Only a Pussy!” gives credence to a child’s grief for a beloved pet and value of an animal life, putting standard degrading colloquialisms “in their place” (see Figure 7<sup>19</sup>):

“Only a pussy” they carelessly say.  
“Banish the idle thought away;  
Never fret for a poor dumb thing.  
Time will more serious losses bring.” (v. 1)

The dotted-quarter/eighth-note combination emphasizes these preposterous comments made by adults, while the line “banish the idle thought away” is emphasized by sterner quarter notes. However, if the satiric tone of these comments is missed by the very youngest, the final verse makes the pussy’s loss clear, now coming from the voice of the child-singers as they reverse the adages from the adult (the “they” above):

Yet our great Maker and hers is one;  
Her little life was not spent in vain,  
She liv’d to love, and be lov’d again.

Children are also given an important social voice in “Spare the Horse” (No. 34, words anonymous, music by J. S. Steane), which one could imagine being sung up and down the streets of town:

Oh, teamster, spare that horse: how hard he tries to go.  
There’s load enough for two. Don’t strike the blow,  
Give him a helping hand. Or ease the load, I pray.  
And he your kindness will, A thousandfold repay.

Words from the child, and many children, will carry power, especially in the final reproof:

Humanity, at last, Brought to a sense of shame,  
Will punish those who give Unnecessary pain.  
Oh, driver, spare that horse; How hard he tries to go!

Acknowledging the laws that exist to punish cruel drivers (e.g., the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1849), the child singers now have some power themselves against the cruelty of their elders.

19. In Volume 2 (1880), Issue 15 (April).

Figure 7: "Only a Pussy!"



A great many of the songs in *Band of Mercy Advocate* and *Band of Mercy Melodies* simply honor the antics and lives of animals. Smithies reminds children of other “unsung” creatures who are valuable to creation, such as the bee: “A very good fellow, and yet a great worker is he” (No. 6). Sung to a jaunty tune of repetitive eighth notes (like bees) by the Rev. Alfred Taylor, this song became popular “in many schools and families” (vi). A similar message of work and worth is made in “The Honey-Bee” (No. 19), a song sung in the voice of the bee who is “working so cheerfully each summer’s day

/ Humming and flying, I speed on my way” (v. 3), while others are fun to sing as they mimic the insects: the altos and basses sing Zs in the refrain of “The Honey Seekers” (No. 30). Some songs encourage children simply to extol the animal companions in their lives, like “My Dog Dash” (No. 18) or “The Old Black Cat” (No. 26). “The Water-Drinkers” (No. 31, words by J. Saffery, music by T. Crampton) reminds us of Band of Mercy’s close connection with the Bands of Hope temperance movement.

But the songs especially prioritize birds. “Bird Day” was first celebrated in America on May 4, 1894, and it was so popular as to need entire sections of music books such as Eddy’s *Songs of Happy Life* (1897) to supply the music, and books like *Bird Day: How to Prepare for It* (1901) to aid celebrations of Bird Day all around the country.<sup>20</sup> But celebration of birdsongs was already anticipated by Thomas Smithies in songs such as “The Woodpecker” (No. 2, music by James H. Croxall); “On a Pleasant Day in April” (No. 4, words by B. Gough, music by T. Crampton); “Up in the Morning” (No. 20; “hum-meth the bee...singeth the lark”); “The Humming-Bird” (No. 23, music by T. F. Seward); “The Owl” (No. 24, music by T. Crampton); “Little Birdie in the Tree” (No. 27, Words and music by P. P. Bliss); “Merry Sings the Lark” (No. 32); and “Swallows are Gayest” (No. 33). As with “The Skylark” (No. 21, words by Benjamin Gough, music by Charles Nebe), many of these songs remind children (and those hearing children sing them) of the bird’s industry and worth: “Sweet bird! So early waking, Thy song of praise to sing” (v. 4). Even the famous American gospel writer Fanny Crosby contributed “The Song of the Cuckoo” (No. 17) simply to extol its vibrant life in first person (see Figure 8<sup>21</sup>):

Away! Away! With footsteps free,  
We’ll chase the shadows o’er the lea;  
Merrily we go, Merrily we go,  
None so gay as we. [Chorus]

While critics are often dismissive of children’s organizations who were simply “teaching children to be kind

20. “Bird Day” was approved by J. Sterling Morton, Secretary of Agriculture, and first celebrated on May 4, 1894, by the school system of its originator, Charles A. Babcock, Superintendent of Schools, Oil City, Pennsylvania. See Charles A. Babcock, *Bird Day: How to Prepare for It* (Silver, Burdett, and Co., 1901).

21. In Volume 2 (1880), Issue 17 (May).

Figure 8: “The Song of the Cuckoo”



to pets and birds and caring for stray dogs,”<sup>22</sup> we might look to the number of laws being passed in both the UK and US during this era which had a major impact on bird protection: the Sea Birds Preservation Act of 1869 (UK), the Wild Birds Protection Act of 1872 (UK), the Lacey Act of 1900 (US), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (Canada and US). Singing in support of birds had significant consequences.

22. Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, 122.

23. Arthur William Moss, *Valiant Crusade: The History of the RSPCA* (Cassell, 1961), 37.

24. Such has been my experience in mainstream Christian churches, though I applaud churches who do tackle such weighty issues; Christian hymnwriters such as Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000) and Shirley Erena Murray (1931–2020) (see ecology hymn lists on LiturgyTools.net, etc.), and scholars such as Mark Porter in *For the Warming of the Earth: Music, Faith, and Ecological Crisis* (SCM, 2024), are doing important work in bringing eco-concerns back into the fold. But there may still be need of more direct singing “for the animals” today.

25. I have organized two Bands of Mercy in Richmond, Indiana, and am working on Bands of Mercy songs with my Community Choristers choir. We have recorded eighteen of these songs from Sarah Eddy’s *Songs of Happy Life* on my academic website, [soundingchildhood.org](http://soundingchildhood.org). Feel free to learn and share the songs found in this article and from Eddy’s book given on this website.

## Conclusion

Children and animals abound in biblical and theological sermons, but not always on their own terms and as entities afforded respect. For centuries dismissed for their smallness, denied power and a voice, animals and children alike were made vulnerable to abuse and early death as a result. But the Christian organization Bands of Mercy, as inaugurated by Catherine and Thomas Smithies, began five decades of Christian kindness and credence extended to animals and children alike. Catherine Smithies saw a Christian duty in advocating for both, saying on her deathbed that “the teaching of children to be kind and merciful to God’s lower creatures is preparing the way for the gospel of Christ.”<sup>23</sup> 1934 is the last issue of the *Band of Mercy* and the movement itself seems to have died a sad death by World War II. It does beg the question, however, how many generations of animal-focused writers in the twentieth century were influenced by direct or indirect involvement with the Bands of Mercy, people like Beatrix Potter, James Herriot, or even Walt Disney (I note that the story about “Jemmy’s Cricket” came out in the December 1905 *Band of Mercy* No. 324, when Walt was four years old).

Bands of Mercy are needed today more than ever, as entire species are being eradicated by climate change, poaching, and habitat destruction, and millions of farm animals suffer horrible, truncated lives in concentrated animal feeding operations. Many Christian communities in the twenty-first century seem loath to take on these existential threats to God’s creation, but they should.<sup>24</sup> Children, in particular, seem to care innately about animals, but they do not have a collective voice to speak for the animals anymore. Those of us who sing with children might bring back the Bands of Mercy and share some of the songs: it might be a God-ordained responsibility to do so.<sup>25</sup>

## Appendix 1

Rules of the Band of Mercy (from Vol. 1, p. 7):

Or, the Juvenile Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

I. This Society is called “The Band of Mercy; or, Juvenile Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.”

II. The object of this Society is promoting of Kindness to Animals by means of Lectures, suitable Literature, the offering of Prizes, and all other appropriate ways as may from time to time be found desirable.

III. Boys and girls will be admitted as members on giving their assent to the following Declaration:— We agree to do all in our power to protect animals from cruel usage, and to promote as far as we can their humane treatment.

IV. A certificate of membership, signed by the Secretary, will be supplied to each member, and it is requested that this card be hung up in some suitable place, so as to be seen by visitors to the house.

V. Once every year, an offer of Prizes for the best Essays on Kindness to Animals is to be made to the Day and Sunday Schools in the parish. If practicable, the distributions of the prizes to be made at some public meeting in the month of June or July.

VI. The Committee will from time to time, as their funds may permit, present books bearing on Kindness to Animals, to the various Sunday School Libraries in the locality.

VII. Monthly or Quarterly meetings will, if practicable, be held, at which addresses will be given and appropriate hymns or melodies sung.

VIII. It is hoped that all the members will not only endeavor to promote the special objects of this Society, but will avoid the use of all angry or harsh words to one another.

## Appendix 2

*Bands of Mercy Advocate* periodical songs at the end of issues; also found in the collection *Bands of Mercy Melodies* (London: S. W. Partridge, c. 1881).

Vol. 1 (Jan–Dec 1879): “The Sparrow’s Petition,” No. 1; “The Woodpecker,” No. 2; “The Bird’s Petition,” No. 3; “On a Pleasant Day in April,” No. 4; “The Bird’s Nest,” No. 5; “The Song of the Bee,” no. 6; “The Helpless Lamb,” No. 7; “Master Doggie,” No. 8; “Only a Little Sparrow,” No. 9; “Poor Fido,” No. 10; “The Ass,” No. 11; “The Snow-Bird’s Song,” No. 12.

Vol. 2 (Jan–Dec 1880): “New Year’s Morning,” No. 13; “Dicky-Birds,” No. 14; “Only a Pussy,” No. 15; “Cruelty,” No. 16; “The Song of the Cuckoo,” No. 17; “My Dog Dash,” No. 18; “The Honey-Bee,” No. 19; “Up in the Morning,” No. 20; “The Skylark,” No. 21; “The Spider,” No. 22; “The Humming-Bird,” No. 23; “The Owl,” No. 24.

Vol. 3 (Jan–Dec 1881): “In the Cold the Robin Comes,” No. 25; “The Old Black Cat,” No. 26; “The Little Birdie in the Tree,” No. 27; “Feeding Neddy,” No. 28; “The Bird’s Request,” No. 29; “The Honey Seekers,” No. 30; “The Water-Drinkers,” No. 31; “Merry Sings the Lark,” No. 32; “Swallows are Gayest,” No. 33; “Spare the Horse,” No. 34; “The Cat and the Dog,” No. 35; “Our Father’s Care,” No. 36.



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## Hymns in Periodical Literature

# Sacred Song in Interfaith Contexts

ANNELI LOEPP THIESSEN

**D**ialogues among diverse religious traditions are not new, but there are still relatively few scholarly sources that explore sacred songs across faith traditions. While both practitioners and scholars are likely to agree that this is an important consideration, it can be hard to know where to begin. The first two articles in this column offer starting places for explorations of interfaith community sounds, first through Debbie Lou Ludolph and Héctor Acero Ferrer's description of an interfaith embodied workshop at a recent conference on polarization; and second through Lucinda Mosher's proposal of a comparative sonic theology across religious traditions. The third article in this column departs in focus as it doesn't specifically explore *interfaith* settings, but rather comes from a Jewish scholar and musician who describes a series of bootleg recordings of cantors from past decades which illuminate the ways cantorial practices have evolved. This piece offers an interesting comparison to Christian church music practices, especially considering the ways congregational song is archived and develops.



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Debbie Lou Ludolph and Héctor Acero Ferrer, “Singing Common Ground: Inshallah Offers an Embodied Response to Polarization to an Interfaith Audience,” *Consensus* 45, no. 1 (2024): 11, <http://doi.org/10.51644/AYYT3233>.

Ludolph and Acero Ferrer invite readers to consider how embodied learning works to supplement dialogue and education on faith and polarization. They recount a session at the 2023 *Our Whole Society* conference in Waterloo, Ontario, which focused on finding common ground in polarization. An arts-based and participatory workshop was included halfway through the conference, led by the Inshallah choir which is conducted by Debbie Lou Ludolph. The session had several goals for participants, including to engage with songs that address identity and collaboration in polarization, and to experience songs from various cultures and faith traditions. This kind of embodied, interfaith encounter allowed participants to encounter difference through both familiar and unfamiliar musical components, as well as language, lyrics, and other themes. The songs were used to create an “in-between” space, allowing a sense of belonging to be extended to all who were gathered. As the authors note, “The discomfort that comes with the cultural dissonances was held within the power of shared story and singing together” (3). Ultimately, the workshop created an interfaith conversation that provided communities with tools to foster respect and understanding about the diversity of faith communities in Canada.

Lucinda Mosher, “Is It ‘Praying Twice’? An Anglican Christian Comparative Theological Consideration of Chanting and Hymn-singing in Bhakti Hindu, Sikh, and Sufi Muslim Traditions,” *Journal of Interreligious Studies* 41 (2024): 27–31.

Lucinda Mosher—a scholar and Episcopal music director—invites a “comparative sonic theology” in this article, building on Guy Beck’s description of “sonic theology” and drawing on the practice of “comparative theology.” She asks: “In the reciting, the chanting, the singing of scripture, what is occurring? How might representatives of the other traditions put it?” (3). She draws on a range of sources—from Qu’ran recitation and the adhan (call to prayer) in Muslim contexts to Anglican chants of the book of Psalms—to provide a succinct exploration of how chant functions in different religious traditions. She explores the roles of mantra, scripture recitation, praise, and doctrinal statement as

factors that are both distinct and shared. This short article offers a helpful framework for further comparative work on sacred song, an area Mosher hopes to develop further. As she delves deeper, Mosher invites a sense of mystery, suggesting that religious chant and song always call our attention to what is indefinable.

Jeremiah Lockwood, “Live Davenings: Technologies of Ritual Learning and the Convening of a Jewish Sacred Music Underground,” *Jewish Social Studies* 29, no. 2 (2024): 34–61, <http://doi.org/10.2979/jss.00008>.

Published in the journal *Jewish Social Studies*, Lockwood’s article offers a fascinating account of musical and liturgical change in Jewish synagogues through a network of underground recordings. A series of secretly collected recordings of Jewish cantors at the pulpit, called “Live Davenings,” have recently surfaced on platforms like YouTube, providing a glimpse into cantorial practices of past decades. These files were captured using audio recording technology that was new in the 1960s, always recorded surreptitiously to avoid being exposed for breaking Jewish ritual law and social conventions. Lockwood highlights how these recordings offer otherwise unattainable practical information about a cantor’s performance in ritual practices of the past, which help to uncover how the cantorial role has evolved. He considers the recordings to be a kind of “prosthesis,” or technologically mediated memory aid. Lockwood reflects on the impact of these recordings, highlighting how the imitative sounds on the recordings have impacted his own sound. He concludes: “The voices of cantors on bootleg recordings speak to a deeply desired inquest into the truth about what a Jewish voice should sound like and what Jewish practices of the sacred consisted of in the past” (54).

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## *Singing the Climate Crisis—In Activism*

MARK PORTER

*The activities of protestors ask us to think about the way we encounter or fail to encounter broader publics through our music, and the way we use our voices on behalf of those who need them.*

For many of us, our awareness of the global climate crisis is intimately bound up with images of activism and protest. Since at least the arrival of Extinction Rebellion, School Strike for Climate, and a broad diversity of other protest groups from around 2018 onwards, issues of climate change have been closely bound up with images of placards, arrests, and groups of people on the streets. As with many protest movements, the climate movement is often accompanied by music. Extinction Rebellion in particular are known for their use of samba bands. Alongside these, they've established a ukulele army and set up choirs, whilst chants and songs form a regular part of their different protest actions.<sup>1</sup> Whilst there are a range of opinions regarding the effectiveness of particular tactics adopted by climate protestors—a diversity of opinion that is likely to extend into their musical activities—as with other musical responses to the climate crisis, the music of the climate movement provides us with a challenge. In stepping out into the public realm, climate protestors sing not just for their own communities but for a wider public. At the same time, they strategise as to how they might be able to use this voice to call out for justice and to fight for the importance of particular issues and concerns. The activities of protestors ask us to think about the way we encounter or fail to encounter broader publics through our music, and the way we use our voices on behalf of those who need them.

This use of music is far from foreign to the Christian tradition. The psalms constantly cry out for God's righteous actions, a call which the prophets often seek to amplify in attending to the cry of the poor, and they often refer to a desire not just to speak out amongst the assembly, but for this voice to extend beyond to be heard among the nations. The scriptures of the Old Testament are full of the expectation both that singing has some kind of public dimension and that it can be an important means of crying out for justice. So what can this look like when it comes to the climate crisis?

### *From Theory into Practice*

One way to imagine what it might look like is to examine what Christian activists are already doing. Christian Climate Action (CCA) in the UK are a group that seek to build bridges between their faith and the cause of climate protest. They believe that Christian faith summons them to stand up in public in the face of the environmental crisis, acting as a public witness in faithful response to the call of God. Whilst they are by no means a group made up of musicians, music often plays an important role in their response

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1. Donna Weston, Leah Coutts, and Marcus Petz, "Music and the Twenty-First Century Eco-warrior," *SN Social Sciences* 1, no. 9 (2021): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00253-z>.

to this calling. Christian climate protestors are incredibly creative people, and they use music and song for a range of different goals. It can be used to manage potentially difficult emotions over the course of a protest, or to infuse it with a sense of prayer and spirituality. It can offer a gentle invitation to others to join in, or it can be defiant and disruptive. It can strategically play with people's expectations and seek to catch them by surprise, or it can act as a prophetic symbol that hopes to resonate with individuals beyond the bounds of established Christian communities.

CCA's creative projects take a range of different paths. These have included the production of a songbook to accompany large-scale protest actions,<sup>2</sup> performances of re-written climate carols,<sup>3</sup> music to accompany public rituals of remembrance,<sup>4</sup> and music to accompany a pilgrimage to COP 26.<sup>5</sup> Whilst oppositional chants of protest are often the first sonic symbol we think of when imagining the sonic world of activism, most of these different musical gestures are not intended to be exclusive or isolating; rather, they draw on the traditions of Christian faith in order to produce a space of meaning and encounter. Often, this musical activity takes place alongside the actions and presence of other individuals and groups, spilling over boundaries as Christian protestors stand in solidarity with those of other faiths and no faith, asking them to share some of a common vision with each other.

## *“Amazing grace” at an AGM*

Whilst many climate protestors find it somewhat intimidating to write completely new material, the practice of re-texting existing tunes and songs is a fairly common practice, taking roots in a wider culture of grassroots creativity. It's a practice that both has a relatively low barrier for entry, and hooks into an existing sense of familiarity. It enables other people to join in whilst playing with existing musical meanings so as to resonate more deeply with those who know the repertoire.

At a protest in 2022, a group of climate protestors stood in the middle of the Annual General Meeting of oil company Shell and sang a re-written version of “Amazing grace.” In standing up to sing they aimed to create disruption and to prevent the meeting going ahead smoothly. As such, there was a certain confrontative edge to their singing. As Christians, however, they also aimed to accomplish more than this through their

singing. In singing a song of worship they intended to engage in a spiritual act, praying for God's grace in the situation around them and for the action of Holy Spirit. They aimed to offer an invitation, believing that God's grace is open for everyone, not simply condemning the oil board members sitting in front of them but inviting them into a new future and a better way of living. The lyrics of the second verse demonstrate the mixture of solidarity and confrontation that the protestors aimed to mix together:

I pray God's Grace on all those here,  
That you will be His heirs,  
And He will bless you as you rid,  
Yourselves of all Shell's shares.<sup>6</sup>

In choosing to draw upon “Amazing grace,” the protestors were aware of the social significance of the hymn and the way it is bound up with issues of colonialism which they see reflected in the exploitation of oil companies. At the same time, they sought to build upon the hymn's popularity as something which has a meaning and significance beyond the walls of the church. They sought to work with the established power and meaning of the hymn in both Christian and secular contexts in order to create something that has a new meaning and significance in a different situation. There is a level of humour to their reworking as they play with the situation and the text, and it is precisely through that sense of playfulness between different realms of meaning and intention that the performance is able to take on a burden of serious meaning without necessarily coming across as overly confrontational in doing so.

## *Effects and Possibilities*

It is easy to see that the singing of a hymn in this manner will have different effects on different people. The diversity of encounters that public performance of music enables means that the effects of actions and protests are never completely predictable, and can have a range of different consequences. Some of these will be positive, drawing people to engage with a cause, helping increase its visibility, and strengthening a sense of solidarity and energy within a movement. None of this is guaranteed, though, and however good the intentions, it can equally be the case that public music will put some people off, that music can distract from other forms of activity and

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2. Christian Climate Action, “Songbook” (2020), <https://christianclimateaction.org/other-resources/songbook>.

3. Christian Climate Action, “Climate Emergency Christmas Carol Book” (2019), <https://christianclimateaction.org/2019/11/25/climate-emergency-christmas-carol-book>.

4. Christian Climate Action, “Extinction Rebellion Was Live: Memorial for Life, Supporting the Church Synod to Save Our Children” (2020), <https://www.facebook.com/christianclimateaction/posts/1460995284057516>.

5. Coat of Hopes, “Song of the Coat of Hopes,” <https://www.coatofhopes.uk/song>.

6. Christian Climate Action, “CCA Protest at Shell AGM” (2022), <https://christianclimateaction.org/2022/05/29/cca-protest-at-shell-agm>.

engagement, and that it can foster an emotional experience which fails to carry with it any deeper or longer-lasting change.<sup>7</sup> These kinds of dangers are present almost anywhere that we use or encounter music, but they are amplified when it comes to high-stakes public performances that both centre around important issues and are heard by a broader audience than more enclosed spaces typically enable.

Risk by itself shouldn't always prevent us from action, however. Risk is often inherent in any undertaking that might lead to a potential reward. Rather, it should lead us to think carefully as to what and how we engage in these kinds of spaces. We can lean more in the direction of conciliation and invitation, or we can take care at whom our performances are directed; we can lean into humour or a sense of spirituality, or we can carefully focus and craft our message to make sure any potential for misunderstanding is minimised. Outside of established ritual spaces, the potential for different forms of creativity is enormous, and we can learn from the attempts of others as we find our own strategies for interacting with different groups and situations, and for developing music that is appropriate to those interactions.

Christian groups that use music at protests do so as part of their broader attempts to integrate faith and activism. This is an important project, as faith serves as

a catalyst to strive for a better world and a better society, and to call those in power to account for their actions. If our faith issues a challenge and invitation to the broader society around us, then we should be ready to consider how that voice is expressed in our music, and how others might hear that and be able to resonate. What kind of presence does our music and song have outside of our own communities? How can it invite others into caring for the world around us? How can we stand up against ecological destruction and injustice? How can music integrate with, inspire, and lend meaning to a range of other non-musical projects and actions? These groups challenge us to cross boundaries into the public realm and to seek out places of encounter. If our faith is not just for ourselves, and indeed offers hope for the whole of creation, then perhaps our music sometimes needs to cross those boundaries, particularly when the world around us is in danger.



Mark Porter is a postdoctoral researcher based at the University of Erfurt in Germany. He is programme chair of the biennial Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives conference. His latest book, *For the Warming of the Earth: Music, Faith, and Ecological Crisis*, is now available from SCM Press.

7. Rob Rosenthal and Richard Flacks, *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011).



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## The Power of the Song

LINDY THOMPSON

The song begins.

The first notes of the music are  
played,  
the voices join the flow,  
the story begins to emerge ...

and we, the hearers,  
are grasped by the hand and pulled  
to wherever the song will take us—

soaring high to the mountain of  
God,

churning slowly through the  
labyrinth of change,

hoping expectantly for healing,

wandering down quiet paths of  
prayer,

lamenting loss and injustice,

bounding joyfully towards a better  
day coming.

The song can soothe or confront,  
heal or expose.

The song can open the soul to new  
vistas,  
never before imagined,  
points of view  
never before encountered.

The song can breathe strength into  
the weary,  
give encouragement to the down  
hearted,  
prompt change in the ready,  
grant peace to the despairing.

The song is a means of grace,  
seeping deep into the bones of the  
listener,  
stirring, searching,  
shining light into unexplored  
places.

The song awakens the soul,  
facilitates growth,  
cultivates goodness and meaning  
from the mixed daily garden of  
experience.

The song is a conveyance  
pulling us to better perspectives,  
firmer foundations,  
truer seeing,  
renewed vision.

The song is a pathway,  
and as we join our voices,  
we surrender to the journey,  
yield to the transformation ...

and find ourselves,  
as the last notes die away,  
standing together  
on higher ground.

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Lindy Thompson is a poet and lyricist who lives in Franklin, TN, with her family. She is a layperson at Christ UMC where she volunteers with youth. She has collaborated with Mark Miller on many choral anthems and congregational songs. Her work can be found at <https://lindythompson.net/>.



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# The Right of Publicity: Law, Ethics, and the Human Voice

ANNE T. GILLILAND

**T**he first time someone contacted me with a question about artificial intelligence (AI), the subject was voice cloning. An instructional designer at the university where I work wanted to update an online educational module used by students to prepare for a professional credentialing exam. The designer had used a voice actor to provide the original narration for the module, but the actor was not available to do additional work for the university on the schedule needed. So, the designer planned to use artificial intelligence tools to simulate the actor's original work. The designer wanted to know if the university had a policy on this sort of use of AI (we didn't) and if there were any model contracts to help form an agreement with the actor where he could give permission for the voice cloning and agree to a fee structure that would compensate him for the work (there are).<sup>1</sup>

At the time that the voice actor and the university signed the original contract, artificial intelligence simulation and cloning of the voice were not subjects that either of the parties had thought about. Today, however, the increased capabilities and public use of artificial intelligence is increasing awareness of the legal and ethical implications of these technologies, and there are many examples of AI-generated voice and music controversies in the news right now. Some involve the rich and famous. Others involve people who work in the music and entertainment industries and are less well known. An anonymous creator writes a song and uses generative artificial intelligence to make it appear that two famous popular music artists are singing it. Fans can find the song on a variety of social media outlets until an intervention by the record company that represents the

artists. Subsequently, the song composer submits the song for a Grammy, but the entry is rejected.<sup>2</sup> Actress Scarlett Johansson threatens to sue OpenAI, claiming that the company used generative AI to manufacture her voice, a charge that the company and other parties deny.<sup>3</sup> Voice actors file a class action lawsuit against a California start-up, claiming that it has misappropriated their voices and threatened their livelihoods. The list seems endless. The common legal theory in all these controversies is the right of publicity.

The right of publicity is a body of law that sits, somewhat uneasily, between privacy law and copyright law. Because it deals with the identity, and, traditionally, a person's name and likeness, once a student told me that she thought of it as the copyright an individual has in their face. The right of publicity governs the right to control the presentation of oneself. Although artificial intelligence issues have made the right of publicity a more urgent topic, the general contours of its issues are well over a hundred years old.<sup>4</sup> Toward the end of the nineteenth century, ordinary people began to use small cameras to take pictures of people on the street without their permission. Society became concerned as it became more common for photographs to be printed and distributed in newspapers, magazines, and advertisements. Lawyers began to formulate and discuss the idea of a right of privacy, which, at its inception included both the "right to be left alone" and the right to control the use of one's image and likeness.<sup>5</sup> One of the first cases to help define the contours of these laws was *Roberson v. Rochester*, a lawsuit that resulted when a young, beautiful woman sat for a photographic portrait and then found out that advertisers were using her likeness on boxes of

.....  
1. Beyond Words, "AI Voice Ethics," <https://beyondwords.io/ai-voice-ethics>.

2. Ethan Shanfeld, "Ghostwriter's 'Heart on My Sleeve,' the AI Generated Song Mimicking Drake and The Weeknd Submitted for Grammys," *Variety*, September 6, 2023, <https://variety.com/2023/music/news/ai-generated-drake-the-weeknd-song-submitted-for-grammys-1235714805>.

3. Nitasha Tiku, "OpenAI Didn't Copy Scarlett Johansson's Voice for ChatGPT, Records Show," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/05/22/openai-scarlett-johansson-chatgpt-ai-voice>.

4. Jennifer Rothman, *The Right of Publicity* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 12–15.

5. Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis, "The Right to Privacy," *Harvard Law Review* 4, no. 5 (1890): 193–220.

flour without permission.<sup>6</sup> On appeal, the court found for the defendant, and outcry over the decision led to the first right of publicity statute, enacted in New York in 1903.<sup>7</sup>

By the mid-twentieth century, many states had some body of law that defined a right of publicity, either common law (judge-made law) or statutory law (enacted by state legislatures), or both.<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, the right of publicity was, and is, more robust in areas of the country that have a strong entertainment industry. In many cases, the parameters of the right of publicity were most explicitly defined when they applied to individuals who made money on their name and likeness, such as actors and singers, or to anyone, famous or not, whose identity was used for advertising. There has never been a federal right of publicity in the U.S., and the requirements for bringing a cause of action under state statutes or common law have varied across the nation. Currently, however, Congress has considered two laws that include elements of the right of publicity, the “No AI FRAUD Act”<sup>9</sup> and the “No AI FAKES Act.”<sup>10</sup> As with the formation of the basic right of publicity, Congress is motivated by technological changes. Previously, technology in the form of portable cameras and advances in printing and distribution of material was the impetus for the development of all the privacy torts. Similarly, artificial intelligence motivates Congress today as they consider how to balance and regulate the different interests and possibilities that artificial intelligence brings to the right of publicity.

Although AI makes these questions more urgent, the controversies predate widespread use of artificial intelligence. For example, in 1992, the Ninth Circuit in California considered the case of the game show personality Vanna White’s right of publicity when an advertiser used a robot model to play her part in an advertisement set in the future. Although the robot did not look like White, the court concluded that the advertisement impinged on her right of publicity by evoking her persona.<sup>11</sup> This case, and other cases, such as one involving more robots that were supposed to evoke the characters who frequented the bar in the Cheers television show,<sup>12</sup> broadened the right of publicity in some jurisdictions to encompass the persona associated with an individual as well as the person’s actual attributes.

One of the ongoing controversies about the right of publicity is the extent to which the right can be passed

on from the identity holder, either because of death or by contract. Initially, like other privacy laws, the fundamental rule was that the right of publicity could not survive death. That changed explicitly in 1984 when Tennessee passed an extremely strong right of publicity law after Elvis Presley’s death in 1977.<sup>13</sup> Part of the impetus for this law came from the conflicts and controversies that developed over the burgeoning marketplace for branded products, memorabilia, and other commemorations. In other cases, the desire for commemoration instead of commerciality led to conflict, such as when a Memphis, Tennessee, non-profit planned to erect a statue of Elvis Presley shortly after his death, and the Presley Estate filed suit.

Just a few months ago, spurred by advances and controversies around generative AI, Tennessee passed, and the governor signed, an even stronger right of publicity bill. This law adds language that specifically protects a person’s voice and that explicitly protects the rights of people who are not famous or do not make their living through their name, likeness, and voice.<sup>14</sup> There are many questions and problems that will probably arise as this law is implemented. Does the law provide leeway to accommodate the First Amendment? Do societal problems arise when the right of publicity never ends? How will we handle conflicts and controversies that will arise when the identity holder acts in ways that are contrary to the interests of the corporation or entity that owns that person’s right of publicity? Other states are considering updating and strengthening their right of publicity statutes too, in light of artificial intelligence advances. As Congress also considers right of publicity laws for the nation, it remains to be seen whether these laws, if they are passed, will give more protection to individuals and create some national harmony in this body of law.

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6. *Roberson v. Rochester Folding Box Co.*, 171 N.Y. 538 (1902).

7. Rothman, 24.

8. Rothman, 45–60.

9. No Artificial Intelligence Fake Replicas and Unauthorized Duplications Act of 2024, H.R. 6943, 118th Cong. (2024).

10. Discussion Draft Nurture Originals, Foster Art, and Keep Entertainment Safe Act of 2023 (circulated Oct. 11, 2023, in Senate).

11. *White v. Samsung Electronics*, 971 F.2d 1395 (9th Cir. 1992).

12. *Wendt v. Host International*, 197 F.3d 1284 (9th Cir. 1999).

13. Tennessee Personal Rights Protection Act of 1984, Tenn. Code Ann. § 47-25-1101.

14. Ensuring Likeness, Voice, and Image Security Act of 2024, Tenn. Code Ann. § 47-25-1101.

# Book and Media Reviews

All prices are given in US dollars.

## *The Dallas Hymnary*

Joel Martinson, Graham Schultz, and David P. Schaap, editors. Selah Publishing Co., 2023. 40 songs, 7 descants, and indices. \$17.50.

Following their annual conference in 2023, the Association of Anglican Musicians (AAM) resolved to share American hymnody, past and present, linked to the Episcopal tradition. This slender spiral bound collection has four main sections: Hymns for the Church Year; Biblical Songs; Hymns for the Church in the World; Hymns for the Church at Worship. A novel feature, honoring a venerable cathedral tradition, is the inclusion of seven descants related to a few of the selections. Names of authors and composers will be familiar to many: Carl P. Daw, Jr., FHS; Richard Dirksen; Timothy Dudley-Smith, FHS; David Hurd; McNeil Robinson; Adam M. L. Tice, FHS; Rae Whitney; and Brian Wren, FHS, to name only a few. The forty new tunes derive from the period 1990–2023.

Most of the hymns are intended for voices in unison, although others are available in SATB settings. Only a few have accompaniments best suited to the piano. Many of the compositions are melodically and harmonically challenging. On one hand, that may feel contemporary and inspiring, while on the other hand, requiring diligent preparation and avoiding the habit of sight-reading. The texts are appealing to contemporary spiritualities and would provide opportunity for small choral groups to offer a musical commentary on special occasions within the liturgical year.

Included are some older texts (e.g. “Come, my way,” by George Herbert) set with a refreshing new tune (e.g. STERNE by Jefferson C. McConnaughey), along with newer texts (e.g. “Rise, O church,” by Susan Palo Cherwien) allied with modern tunes reminiscent of the great tunes of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1866).

Both pastors and pastoral musicians who seek links between lectionary readings and the liturgical cycle will find rewards in this collection of incisive faith statements and fresh tunes, ensuring that “the strain of praise dies not away.”

Fred Kimball Graham, FHS, is Associate Professor Emeritus (Church Music) of Emmanuel College at Victoria University in the University of Toronto and was instrumental in establishing Canada’s sole graduate program in Sacred Music at a theological college. Earlier in his career, he led music at the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Halifax, NS.

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