



WORKING ON WORSHIP (18)

Re-discovering Traditional Hymns

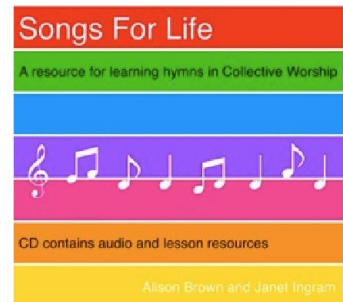
New songs or old songs?

King David in the Bible (Psalm 96) encouraged people to sing God's praise and often told them to sing new songs, encouraging them to keep a fresh sense of God's greatness in their lives. Some schools have discovered a huge range of new Christian songs to sing as part of worship, in all sorts of styles and from right across the world.

However, there is also a place for learning and singing some much older songs and hymns, even in primary schools. The words may sometimes be a challenge but are not insurmountable: a good place to start might be working on some traditional Christmas carols, maybe getting children involved with carol singing for charity or in local old people's homes.

Derby and Leicester Dioceses brought out 'Songs for Life', which looks at 6 well-known older Christian hymns often sung at national or civic ceremonies, weddings or funerals. The introduction to the resource says:

'This rich tapestry of Christian heritage has been passed down to us from previous generations in many ways ... one very precious strand is handed to us through hymns and songs of praise..... .. Many of our traditional hymns contain poetry and rhythm; theology and contemplative thought; beauty and challenge. A good number have stood the test of time and become a spiritual vision through which many people have found strength, expression and comfort.'



The pack contains materials to help teachers pass on 6 of the best known older hymns in the belief that children will benefit from learning them. Which do you know?

Amazing Grace	Love Divine all loves excelling
Be still and know	Praise my soul the King of Heaven
Father Lord of all Creation	The Lord's my Shepherd

The pack offers backing tracks, advice on teaching children to sing the hymns and collective worship based on each one. In addition there are excellent RE materials which tackle key Christian beliefs embedded in the hymns.

'Songs for Life' costs £15 from:

<https://derby.anglican.org/education/schools/collective-worship/collective-worship-resources/>



Top Ten Hymns

Maybe you grew up on BBC's 'Come and Praise'. The BBC also compose lists of top hymns from their popular 'Songs of Praise' which suggest other titles and maybe you would choose differently:

Maybe a rugby favourite: ***Bread of Heaven.***

Or the Navy hymn: ***Eternal Father Strong to save.***

Or the Harvest hymn: ***We plough the fields.***

Or the classic Victorian children's hymns: ***All things bright and beautiful*** and ***There is a green hill far away.***

As a useful exercise arrange for children to interview parishioners from the local C of E church about their favourite hymns and create your own top tens. Make sure children ask for people's reasons for choosing their favourites. Ask other local churches too, including new churches and compare results. Often versions of hymns can be found on You-tube so children can hear what some of them sound like.

Finding hymns to learn

You might like to visit:

<http://www.worshipworkshop.org.uk/>

This website enables schools to choose and download hymns and songs by season or by Christian values. Many of its current 90 or so songs are very traditional e.g.



For all the saints / Lord of all hopefulness / Tell out my soul

You can download words, melody line, accompaniment and score, but particularly useful are the 'echo' tracks, which allow children to listen and then sing the line back.

The site includes more modern hymns by the prolific songwriter Graham Kendrick e.g. '**Make Way, Make Way**' - a Palm Sunday hymn, '**From Heaven you came**', and the ever-popular '**Shine Jesus Shine**'; and a beautiful Stuart Townend song – '**How Deep the Father's Love**'.

Note also how many songs are written by the even more prolific Wesleys (John and Charles) and find out more about them. Hear a Welsh choir sing '**O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing**' or '**And can it be**'.

Royal Weddings

Look out for Royal Weddings! A national event like this makes a good starting point for finding out about some traditional hymns. Would the children have been able to sing the hymns at Prince William and Kate's wedding, for example? You can still see and hear the hymns being sung at this royal wedding service and even see the service sheet



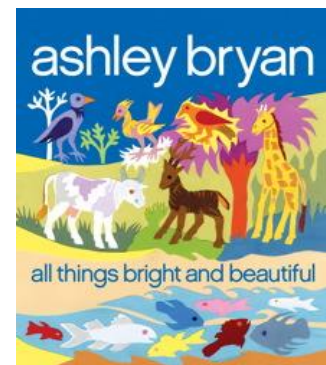
They sang:

- **Jerusalem**
- **Love Divine all loves excelling**
- **Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah (Bread of Heaven)**

And, of course, everyone sang **the National Anthem**, a traditional, patriotic song which surely all children should learn and discuss in school, maybe alongside some of the other national anthems heard at International sporting events.

Comparing old and new

'Worship Workshop' features two versions of 'The Lord's my Shepherd', the traditional 'Crimond' and a newer setting by Stuart Townend, used in many churches. It would be good for children to learn both of these and then hear the one composed by Howard Goodall as the theme to 'The Vicar of Dibley'. Pupils could discuss how and when different versions might be used e.g. 'Crimond' is often played at funerals.



Another comparison might be made with the famous 'All things bright and beautiful'. There are two traditional tunes. Ask some old folks to sing it and share memories of singing it at school as a child. Investigate the song's history, listen to a modern setting by John Rutter and keep an eye open for Ashley Bryan's award-winning book illustrating the song (pub. Simon and Schuster). Pupils could create their own film or powerpoint to the words and sing their own backing track!

The United Church of Canada added a fourth verse to 'All things bright and beautiful', one particularly appropriate to Canadian geography: *The rocky mountain splendour, / the lone wolf's haunting call, / the great lakes and the prairies, / the forest in the fall*

Traditional hymns are often adapted. "Eternal Father", the Navy Hymn, may be referred to by the last line of verse 1, "For Those in Peril on the Sea". It was adapted in the USA by 1982 to include the words, "Glad praise from space, air, land, and sea".

See the adaptations for aviators, submariners, etc.:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternal_Father,_Strong_to_Save!

Singing the Lord's Prayer

Many children learn the Caribbean Lord's Prayer at some time. There are other traditional settings which could be also tried e.g. that by Albert Hay Malotte. An

example of this recording is found on 'The Lord's Prayer' project CD – available from www.cofesuffolk.org for £15. Lots of other sung Lord's Prayers are included on the CD, including the famous 'Millennium Prayer' sung by Cliff Richard.

Hymns with stories

On the Lord's Prayer CD mentioned above, there are also assemblies which tell the stories behind each of the songs.

Some other traditional hymns have fascinating stories behind them e.g. **Amazing Grace**, which was written by John Newton, a slaver turned Christian, or '**He who would valiant be**' by John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress. Several internet sites give potted histories of hymns. Christmas Carols often have good stories behind them.

Modern and traditional?

John Bell of the Iona Community in Scotland is one of the best-known modern hymn-writers. He regularly takes old folk tunes and sets Christian words to them. Bell is one of a group of song-writers from the later 20th century whose songs are now 'classics'.

Here are some examples:

- **The Summons** (Will you come and follow me?) – John Bell, 1987
- **The Servant song** - Richard Gillard 1976
- **I, the Lord of Sea and Sky** – Daniel L. Schutte, 1981
- **Christ be our Light** - Bernadette Farrell, 1993

Some modern classics are now available in child-friendly format from 'Out of the Ark' Music: <https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/out-of-the-ark-essentials-assembly-hymns.html>

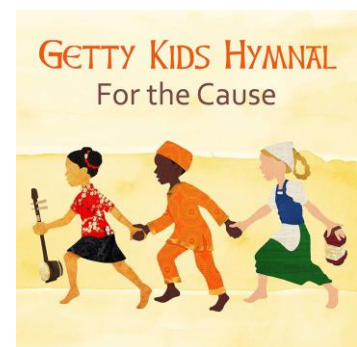
Looking forward.... and singing new songs....

While teaching children past classics, we should balance this with budding classics of the future. Modern Christian song 'top tens' show the prominence of the composer and lyricist, Chris Tomlin, and the song writers: Matt Redman, Stuart Townend, the Gettys.

Songs consistently rated in the top ten in the last few years are:

- '**Jesus Messiah**' or '**I will follow**' (Tomlin)
- '**In Christ Alone**' (Townend)
- '**Blessed be your name**' (Redman)

Renditions can be found on the internet / Youtube and played as pupils gather or leave Worship-time. Pupils can try singing them and / or discuss which they like and why, and what they think the songs say about God, Jesus or the Christian life. In doing so, they will discover that Christians today still write new songs to praise and worship God.



Watch out, in particular for the Getty Kids Hymnal – three outstandingly recorded sets of both classic and modern hymns with huge sounds and children's voices – downloadable from <https://store.gettymusic.com/uk/>