

Christ Church Freemantle

Sunday 17th January – Second Sunday of Epiphany

As we continue to tread carefully in a new and changing world, and long for the things we used to do, I would like to consider how we could collectively reflect on our thoughts, feelings, experiences over the last year. I thought a powerful way to do this would be through song. We can't sing yet, but this will return and what a joyous moment that would be.

How to go about it? If you can remember what singing was, one of the great things about our hymn book at Church is the use of modern words and literature alongside 'older' familiar tunes. This indeed is a popular route amongst living hymn writers as it very easily brings fresh, emotive and sometimes challenging themes to a congregation through a well-known and rousing tune.

I would like to invite you all to put some thoughts down on paper (or computer!) and send them to me. Maybe you will have a tune in mind in which case let me know. Don't over think it, make it honest and prayerful. What I will then do is look to see how your prose falls within 'metre' and try to fit it, without change to a suitable tune.



Alternatively if you have a rousing tune in mind that you think your reflection would fit to, give that a go! There are thousands if not millions of melodies out there, some laying unused or undiscovered!

I'll end by giving an example of how it could work. I'll use a hymn tune important to me as both a Christian and resident of Southampton: O God, our help in ages past

In metric terms it is formed : **8. 6. 8. 6.** The important thing to note is that these numbers reflect the number of syllables not words (though of course there are many 1 syllable words!);

O God, our help in ag/es past, **8**
our hope for years to come, **6**
our shel/ter from the stor/my blast, **8**
and our e/ter/nal home; **6**

My offering could look like (and remember I am thinking with a very musical hat on!)

When every day I wake from sleep I hope and pray to God that family and friends afar keep safe from every harm.

Which would convert to:

When eve/ry day I wake from sleep
I hope and pray to God
that fa/mi/ly and friends a/far
keep safe from eve/ry harm.

Now that is one line. You could pour out pages and pages of prayerful prose, great! It may not make it all in, it may not work. Do not be disheartened. Writing down our feelings is a powerful way of dealing with things and it maybe that you don't want to send me anything. Some of the great hymn texts were not destined to music (think of Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*) and sometimes trying to write with music already in mind can make things feel unnatural and odd!

Also, remember from my previous 'thoughts' there are many examples of prose in which only a small snippet is chosen for worship, or if they do, verses may well have a dreaded * and left out!

I hope when we come to sing again and offer our combined voices to worship, we may have our own Parish hymn (or hymns) that praises God, *with hearts and minds and voices*

Craig Lawton

