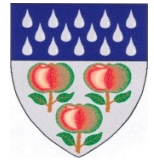




# Hyfrydol



No. 97

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter

March 2022

## This month

On Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup>, we have our Lenten Evensong service. Most of this issue of Hyfrydol is devoted to that occasion. Then, on the following Thursday, at 7 pm, rehearsals for our parish presentation of Handel's Messiah commence.

Rev. Stuart Holman will be commissioned as our new Rector at a service to be held on Tuesday 15 March at 7 pm. We shall be contributing to the service by singing Stanford's *Jubilate* and Rutter's *Clare Benediction*.



## Last month



More masks, more muffled singing. But it was good to see our numbers growing each week and by the end of the month we were able to sing again with enunciation because the NSW Premier and our wardens allowed us to ditch the cloth and paper shields. We don't know how accurate this statement might be, but by our observation, while we all know of people who had Covid, and many of us have been close or casual contacts, not one of our choristers has actually suffered the virus.

Praise the Lord!

We were present at the service where Paul Sampson was commissioned as the new CEO of the Bush Church Aid Society in NSW. We didn't sing much, but it was good to be there. And the supper was first rate!



## Evensong

This month we are going to try and enhance our readers' experience of our Lenten Evensong by adding some background inspiration to each of the pieces we shall be singing, starting with the introit.

### Introit – God be in my head

This short song of petition for God's presence is said to be from the 1514 *Sarum Primer*, which was a collection of prayers and worship resources developed in Salisbury, England, during the 13th century. The author is unknown. In *Hymns for Today's Church* the text is attributed to "after R Pynson (c. 1514)". Richard Pynson was a printer of books in sixteenth century London. He printed the only surviving copy of the *Sarum Book of the Hours* which is kept at Clare College, Cambridge.

The tune to which we sing the song was composed by Henry Walford Davies. His version is at No. 543 in HTC; John Rutter did the particular arrangement we shall sing at Evensong.

### The preces and responses

These are short petitions that are sung alternately as versicle (by the precentor) and response (by the choir, and sometimes congregation). This form of prayer is one of the oldest in Christianity, finding its source in the pre-Christian Hebrew prayers of the Psalms in Temple Worship. The 'Preces' and 'Responses' are separated within the Evensong service, with the Psalm, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis being sung in between them.

### Psalm 51

It is a marvel, but nevertheless a fact, that writers have been found to deny David's authorship of this Psalm, but their objections are frivolous, the Psalm is David-like all over. It would be far easier to imitate Milton, Shakespeare, or Tennyson, than David. His style is altogether *sui generis*,<sup>1</sup> and it is as easily distinguished as the touch of Rafaele or the colouring of Rubens.

The psalm is sub-titled, "When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

<sup>1</sup> Unique

When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see the greatness of his guilt, he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his psalmody while he was indulging his flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accompaniment of sighs and tears. The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialities in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologize for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they reflect that the licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.

(C H Spurgeon, 1834-91)

The famous setting of Psalm 51 is that by Gregorio Allegri of the Sistine Chapel Choir, as transcribed by the young Mozart. While we have sung that version several times in the distant past, Peter Hamilton has set it this time to an Anglican chant by Matthew Camidge (1758-1844) who was a well-known local musician in Northern England, famous for his organ playing.

### **Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis**

If we sang Evensong every Sunday as many of us once did, we would use simple Anglican chants for the canticles. But as Evensong is now only presented quarterly at St Swithun's, we always sing much grander settings of these prayers of Mary and of Simeon. Our music library holds around two dozen grand settings; half of them are in our current repertoire, and some rather better known than others. This month we sing John Ireland's *Evening Canticles in F*.

### **The anthem – O God, early in the morning I cry unto you**

We have written previously about Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his untimely execution at the hands of the German Nazis (Hyfrydol June 2021).

Eberhard Bethge, a student and friend of Bonhoeffer's, writes of a man who saw the execution: "I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer... kneeling on the floor praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the few steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God."

While he was in prison awaiting execution he had lots of time for prayer and to write. This is one of the prayers, taken from his *Prayers from Prison*, 1978.

#### Morning Prayer for Fellow-Prisoners

O God, early in the morning I cry to you.

Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you: I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness, but with you there is light;  
I am lonely, but you do not leave me;

I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help;  
I am restless, but with you there is peace.

In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience;  
I do not understand your ways, but you know the way for me.



**Psalm 63:1**

O heavenly Father, I praise and thank you for the peace of the night;  
I praise and thank you for this new day;  
I praise and thank you for all your goodness and faithfulness throughout my life.

You have granted me many blessings;  
Now let me also accept what is hard from your hand.  
You will lay on me no more than I can bear.  
You make all things work together for good for your children.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You were poor and in distress, a captive and forsaken as I am.  
You know all man's troubles;  
You abide with me when all men fail me;  
You remember and seek me;  
It is your will that I should know you and turn to you.  
Lord, I hear your call and follow;  
Help me.

O Holy Spirit,  
Give me faith that will protect me from despair, from passions, from vice;  
Give me such love for God and men as will take away all hatred and bitterness;  
Give me the hope that will save me from fear and faint-heartedness.  
O holy and merciful God, my Creator and Redeemer, my Judge and Saviour,  
You know me and all that I do.

You hate and punish evil without respect of persons in this world and the next;  
You forgive the sins of those who sincerely pray for forgiveness;  
You love goodness, and reward it on this earth with a clear conscience, and in the world to come, with a crown of righteousness.

I remember in your presence all my loved ones, my fellow-prisoners, and all who in this house perform their hard service;  
Lord, have mercy.

Restore me to freedom, and enable me so to live now that I may answer before you and before men.  
Lord, whatever this day may bring, Your name be praised.  
Amen.

The prayer is packed with emotion; despair and loneliness, but also hope and trust. Peter Hamilton has used the opening words of this prayer as the foundation of a new anthem, which will be premiered at our Evensong. By setting the prose text to a very atmospheric tune, Peter has turned the prose into poetry and, seemingly, intensified the emotion.

Peter's version of the first paragraphs of Bonhoeffer's prayer follows:

O God, early in the morning I cry unto you.  
Help me to pray and think only of you.  
I cannot pray alone.

In me there is darkness; you are light.  
I am lonely but you leave me not.

I am so feeble in heart but you do not leave me.  
I am restless, but with you there is peace.  
In me there is bitterness; but with you there is patience.  
O God, your ways are past understanding  
But you know the way for me.  
Amen

It is a prayer for the early morning, but our anthem today is a world premiere rendition of a fine piece of music, so the time of day is irrelevant!

### **The vesper – A Clare benediction**

John Rutter was once a member of the choir of Clare College Cambridge. In his *Notes* written in 2003, he records: "A *Clare Benediction* (1998), named in honour of my alma mater, Clare College Cambridge, is one of a number of choral blessings I have written over the years, in every case for a person or institution of special significance to me."

**The Clare College Chapel**



## The hymns

### There is a green hill far away

This is Mrs Alexander's most popular hymn, written at the bedside of a sick child. The child recovered and thereafter claimed the hymn as her own.

### O sacred head surrounded

Better remembered by the older parishioners as "Sacred head, sore wounded" which was the translation by Robert Bridges of the German version of this long medieaval Latin poem, *Salve mundi salutare*. Bach used the old German sixteenth century tune five times in his St Matthew's Passion, hence its name: *Passion Chorale*.

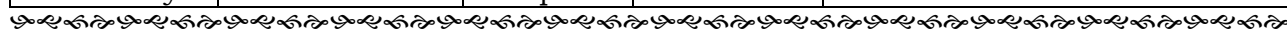
### When I survey the wondrous cross

This is the hymn thought by Matthew Arnold to be the finest in the English language. And who would argue against him?



## The current aspirational calendar for 2022

Day	Date	Time	Location	Service/activity
Saturday	12 March	5 pm	Swiz	Lenten Evensong
Tuesday	15 March	7 pm		Commissioning Service for Stuart Holman
Thursday	17 March	7:30 pm	Swiz	Messiah rehearsals begin
Saturday	9 April		Swiz	Messiah presentation
Friday	15 April		Swiz	Good Friday service
Sunday	24 April		Swiz	Anzac Day service
Saturday	11 June	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Sunday	12 June	10 am	Swiz	RSCM Music Sunday
Sunday	19 June	2 pm	Swiz	Huguenot service
Saturday	20 August	5 pm	Swiz	Celebration of Psalms
Saturday	29 October	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Saturday	26 November	8 pm	Swiz	Foundation concert



## Hyfydol

The editor very gratefully acknowledges the contributions received from readers for this and past issues. Further contributions are always very thankfully accepted (preferably in Word format, but pdf is also very acceptable):

- Personal stories;
- Musical stories;
- Just about anything, really.

Send them to [chideock@optusnet.com.au](mailto:chideock@optusnet.com.au)