

HYMNS IN WORSHIP

**A selection of slides used at a presentation
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by

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Worship

- **Worship is active, not passive**
- **Worship is about the whole of life and how we live it**
- **Worship is doing good, caring for the most vulnerable, seeking justice for the oppressed**

Amos 5: 23-24

‘Take away from me the noise of your songs.

I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

**But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everlasting
stream.’**

20th Century Liturgy

Various Issues

- **The People of God**
- **Participation by everyone in worship**
- **Worship is part of day-to-day living**
- **The family**
- **Engagement with the world**
- **Rights and justice; equality; poverty; the marginalised; discrimination**
- **Peace**

Liturgy is ...

- **bigger than words: it encompasses what we do as well as what we say**
- **always about the corporate gathering**
- **always bigger than the personal, even though it may include it**
- **always about the whole service: three dimensions: human-to-God, God-to-human, human-to-human.**

'I' or 'We'

- **The Creeds**

**Nicene Creed: Book of Common Prayer page 182 compared with the
Nicene Creed page 205**

Apostles' Creed: page 112

- **The Lord's Prayer pages 112 - 113**

- **Examples of hymns in the personal or corporate**

421 I come with joy

419 I am not worthy

532 Who are we who stand and sing?

451 We come as guests invited

Late 20th Century Musical issues

- **Charismatic Movement**
- **The Hymn Explosion**
- **Worship Songs**
- **Hymns of the world church**
- **Hymns shared by Christian denominations**
- **Instruments in worship**
- **Movement / Dance**

'... throw caution to the wind'

O God of the eternal now,
why is your Church so slow?
What is that prevents us all
in grace and faith to grow?

If, Lord, it is our love of ease
by which we thwart your
plan,
then call us out, unsettle us,
and lead us by the hand.

May we with courage take the
risk
and leave the past behind,
to be a people on the move,
throw caution to the wind.

Give us the heart of Abraham,
for changes make us bold;
and bless us only so that we
in turn may bless the world.

- Fred Kaan

‘... the important and terrifying priestly task’ which belongs to those who choose hymns, in that they place words of sung prayer on people’s lips ‘and not only words but also melodies that interpret those words and give them affective shape’.

- John Witvliet, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

Functions of hymns

- **Unify the body**
- **To glorify God**
- **Describe doctrine**
- **Intellectual content + emotional impact**
- **Set a mood**
- **Provide space for reflection**
- **Highlight key parts of the service**
- **Echo and reinforce other parts**

- **Hymns express shared worship but also form habits of praise and prayer for the future.**
- **They provide a resource for Christian learning and prepare those who sing for what may lie ahead of them, including bereavements.**

Advice re choice of hymns

Book of Common Prayer page 75:

‘In the selection of hymns careful attention should be given to ensure that they are appropriate to the Bible readings and sermon.’

(... and to their position within the liturgy)

“We make choices about music in liturgy best when we use all the elements at our disposal – all we know about music, about theology, the nature of the community and the context”

Considerations when choosing hymns

- What is a hymn meant to do at this point in this worship of this church?
- Is it appropriate to the occasion, the congregation and the available musical resources?
- Is it addressed to God, about God, to one another or about others?
- Will we include treasures from our own generation, from the past, from other cultures?
- How many hymns? 3 or 4, maximum 5
- How many verses? Be ready to omit verses (sensibly)
- Keys and time signatures should vary
- Refrains – not in every hymn
- Use descants sparingly

Hymns should reflect ...

Bible Readings

Liturgical Season

Time of day

Position in service

Type of service

What's known

Worship style

Musical resources

Number / age of people

Caution ...

**Hymns and other musical items
should not dominate
or
impede the words of the liturgy**

Help resources

- **Indexes at back of hymn books (Scriptural and topical)**
- **“Sing to the Word” – CD¹**
- **“Companion to CH5”**
- **RSCM ‘Sunday by Sunday’**
- **Observe what others do**
- **Visit other churches**

¹Edward Darling, Sing to the Word, Recorded Church Music Committee of the Church of Ireland.

Companion to CH5

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**
- **Chapter 2: Hymnody in the Church of Ireland**
- **Chapter 3: Notes on the Hymns (90% of the book)**
- **Chapter 4: Using the Hymnal**
- **Bibliography**
- **Indexes**