



# What are the Best Places to Find Hymns on Specific Subjects?

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## Short Guide No 7: What are the Best Places to Find Hymns on Specific Subjects?

*Hymns for worship usually follow a general pattern, either being necessary at a particular place in the liturgy or, in some circumstances actually providing the framework for the liturgy itself. Nevertheless there are some occasions when hymns on specific subjects are sought. These may be of a seasonal nature, church or secular, or related to a particular theme.*

Most hymn books are a good source for general hymns and contain comprehensive indexes, not only relating to the liturgical year, but also to aspects of faith and belief, but finding hymns related to specific subjects can sometimes be more challenging. Where do we look?

### Printed Resources

Over many years collections of hymns have been gathered together on different themes. They are too numerous for all to be mentioned so what is listed here is a representative sample:

- *A Panorama of Christian Hymnody*, Routley, E., Richardson, P. (GIA Publications, Inc.), provides an overview of Christian hymns from the 1st century CE. The texts of almost a thousand hymns are included.
- *Agape: Songs of Hope and Reconciliation*, edit. Hamilton, M. (Oxford University Press), offers a collection of hymns from around the world.
- People looking for hymns from a worldwide perspective will find the publications of the **Global Song Program** of the American United Methodist Church a useful resource.
- The **Iona Community** also has publications in the area of world hymnody, and many other subjects not always touched on in mainstream denominational or commercial hymnals.
- The **Royal School of Church Music's** publication *Sunday by Sunday* is available to RSCM members. This is a quarterly liturgy planner which often contains special articles, so back numbers are well worth consulting.

### Digital Resources

- *HymnQuest*, while anticipating a transition to web-based resourcing, is currently available on disc. *HymnQuest* is published by Stainer & Bell Ltd for the Pratt Green Trust <http://hymnquest.com/>. Produced by a charity, with no denominational agenda, this resource offers a vast compendium of hymn texts (over 26,600) indexed by first line, theme and Biblical text. The search facility can track down words or phrases across the whole collection of hymns represented.
- *Song Pro* (<http://www.creationsoftware.com/>) is best known as software to enable projection of hymns into which hymns not contained within the resource can be imported. The basic library contains 3,300 songs.

## Web-Based Resources

Most resources of a digital nature are web-based.

- The web-site of the **Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland** (<http://www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk/>) carries some new hymn texts and often these relate to particular themes or issues. The web-site of the **Hymn Society in the United States and Canada** (<http://www.thehymnsociety.org/>) keeps a page of hymn texts ranging over a number of years. These are mostly newly written and can be identified by titles provided by authors.
- The **Jubilate Group** web-site (<http://www.jubilate.co.uk/>) requires registration, which is free, and gives access to a wide range of hymn texts, music and liturgical texts. There is useful search facility.
- **Twelvebaskets** (<https://theworshipcloud.com/>) is a commercial site carrying a wide range of resources. Hymns can be searched out by theme, author or first line and there is a rolling lectionary update providing new texts every week related to the Revised Common Lectionary.
- **Cyberhymnal** (<http://www.hymntime.com/tch/>) holds over 8,900 items. Hymns are listed by topic and scriptural allusion as well by first line. Material held here is mostly out of copyright.
- A valuable resource is the **Worship Workshop** web-site of the Church of England (<http://www.worshipworkshop.org.uk/>) is designed to provide materials for schools but can be equally useful for churches. Songs and hymns are given for Seasons and also for Values. You can download accompaniments and printed music.
- **Singing the Faith plus** (<http://www.singingthefaithplus.org.uk/>) is a web-site of the Methodist Church in the UK linked to its latest hymn collection. It provides additional tools to be used with the book collection including some enhanced search possibilities. Additionally, new texts are published here and no registration is required for their use.
- The **General Board of Discipleship of the American United Methodist Church** runs a website which is very regularly updated carrying hymns related to the lectionary and church seasons together with items responding to particular issues and themes. See the various categories at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/worship-planning>.
- **Hymnary.org** is an online hymn and worship music database which can be browsed or searched in various ways, including by hymn title, tune, subject, author and Scripture reference. In partnership with the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, the project now also includes the Dictionary of North American Hymnody. See <http://www.hymnary.org/>.

## Individual Commissions

Many hymn writers welcome commissions to write hymns for particular occasions or situations. Members of the Hymn Society have written texts relating to anniversaries, hymns for schools, the sex trade, public occasions such as council meetings, suicide, tree planting, church dedications and many other themes. Anyone seeking a commission has to realise that hymn poets cannot always just write to order: inspiration is needed. Nor is this a full-time occupation for any of us. But we will do our best!

*Andrew Pratt* – June 2012 – © The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland  
Ref HSSG107.2. For more in this series, see the web site below.

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For anyone who enjoys, sings, plays, chooses, introduces, studies, teaches or writes hymns ...  
The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Visit [www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk](http://www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk) for more details.