



Getting Hymns Published

Short Guide No 18: Getting Hymns Published

To write one or more hymns and have them used by a congregation to which you belong is one thing; to have these hymns published commercially is another matter. This paper looks primarily at hymn texts but similar principles apply for music.

Before publishing

1. Write, check and re-write. The first draft is rarely the finished article.
2. Let someone else see what you have written and listen to what they say about it. Other writers can be helpful but, equally, any comments ought to be welcomed—unless you only want ‘professionals’ to sing your hymns! The Hymn Society offers an Advisory Service for hymn writers who are members—see our web site.
3. If you continue to write try to find someone you trust who can look over your hymns as you write them and who can help you to improve them.
4. Use your hymns yourself.
5. Writing can be lonely; join a hymn writing network like *Worship Live* or *Jubilate* (<https://www.jubilate.co.uk/>).
6. Read about writing—secular magazines like *Writing Magazine* can offer hints and technical help.
7. Enter competitions—The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada offers regular information about such ‘hymn searches’. Our own Society also notes such searches from time to time.
8. And now to publish...

Conventional publishing

Find a publisher who works with your style of material. The *Writers’ & Artists’ Year Book* will provide addresses and details of the publishing interests of commercial publishers.

Don’t be afraid to approach the bigger publishers, for example, Kingsway (now Integrity—<http://www.integritydirect.com/>), Kevin Mayhew (<https://www.kevinmayhew.com/>) or Stainer & Bell Ltd. (<https://stainer.co.uk/>); but don’t expect immediate results. Remember that publishers will promote you and make your hymns available to others, but to do this costs money. As a consequence publishers will be very careful about what they accept. If a publisher offers advice think very hard before rejecting it. You may preserve your integrity, but your hymns may not reach beyond the congregations to which you yourself can take them. Some publishers of hymns will allow you to retain your own copyright. Others buy copyrights but then administer them over years paying ongoing royalties.

Some hymn publishing takes place through denominational groups and through organisations such as the Iona Community.

Self-publishing

Today self-publishing is a real option, either in print or digitally (*Kindle* etc.). Beware of firms who offer to publish you for a fee. Not all are ‘vanity publishers’ who take your money and offer little more than printed copy for the effort, but few will be able to do much to promote you.

If you are able to set pages yourself a local printer may well be able to produce a very acceptable product; there are many who provide a suitable service. Using this route you need to be able to promote your own work. To get listing beyond your own circle of friends an ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is essential. To register and purchase these, contact Niensens at <http://www.isbn.nielsenbook.co.uk/>.

Information on how to convert copy to Kindle format is available on the Amazon web site.

Bookbaby (<https://www.bookbaby.com/how-to-make-an-ebook>) is also valuable in offering free guidelines on writing and publishing in general terms. The site also offers specific help in producing ebooks in formats other than Kindle. As with all internet sites beware of services offered inside the site which may incur extra costs.

Internet publishing

In the current climate the internet can be a legitimate and viable way to publish. Unless otherwise stated, for the sites below the author retains copyright and no royalties are paid.

- **The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland** (<https://hymnsocietygbi.org.uk/>): Some members have already submitted hymns here—see who's there and join them.
- **Worship Live** (<https://worshipliveorguk.wordpress.com/>): Originally a magazine with new hymns, prayers and other worship material published by Stainer & Bell Ltd., but now run independently as a web site edited by the Rev. Dr. Janet Wootton. Hymns submitted for publication will receive a critical review with editorial help if an item can be improved. Accepted items may appear online. The site works like a magazine, moving through different themes. Worship Live also runs occasional residential writing weekends.
- **Worship Cloud / Seedresources / Twelve Baskets** is a selection of over 48,000 resources of hymns, images, liturgies and growing weekly. There is lectionary-related material and much, much more. Register free at <https://theworshipcloud.com/> then upload. Each item is checked before publication. No editorial help is offered but the vetting does ensure that items are deemed suitable to the site. No theological or denominational affiliation. Royalties are paid for items downloaded.
- **The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada**: register free and after you have been accepted post freely—see <http://www.thehymnsociety.org/>. The site is monitored but not subject to critical review.
- **Global Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church (USA)**: Contact Dean McIntyre from the contact details on <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/music>. If you have seasonal material or a text that is news-related Dean will use it if it is acceptable.
- **The Methodist Church – Singing the Faith Plus**: To accompany the hymn book '*Singing the Faith*' with much more, at <http://www.singingthefaitplus.org.uk/>. Submissions are considered by a review committee. If acceptable they will be posted.
- **ArtServe** (<http://www.artserve.org.uk/>) began in 2008 as an initiative of the Methodist Church Music Society (founded 1935 to support Methodist musicians and all types of music in worship). ArtServe has now superseded MCMS. Registration and login required. Hymns may be submitted for consideration for posting.

Andrew Pratt – October 2014 – © The Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland
Ref HSSG118. For more in this series, see the web site below.

Opinions expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

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 for more details.