

Our first Lincoln Conference fast approaches...

The Booking Form for our Lincoln Conference, to be held at Bishop Grosseteste University, (Tuesday 18th July – Friday 21st July), was circulated with the last mailing and is also available on the website. At present we anticipate just over 50 people to enjoy the seven lectures, Short Metres, Workshops, Worship and, indeed, so much more, in what promises to be an interesting, varied and enriching Conference. **We can still take bookings if you would like to come!** Bishop Grosseteste University should be able to squeeze a few more in! Please get in touch with the Secretary.

Praying with Hymns – a resource from the Methodist Church

Praying with Hymns is a booklet intended as an aide for those who want to use hymns as prayers, and for which many lend themselves admirably. You might be preparing to lead worship at a church or event without music; or have been asked to lead prayers and are anxious about what to say; or you need to find the right words in a pastoral situation: hymns can prove an excellent resource in all these situations. Or perhaps you are just someone who loves the poetry of the hymnbook and would like to explore it further.

Praying with Hymns, designed for use with *Singing the Faith* (2011), but which can be used independently, can be ordered as an A5 booklet (price £3.50) from Methodist Publishing:

methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/STFHAP21/praying-with-hymns

Prayer topic from a recent Newsletter (May/June/July 2023) of the John Newton Project:

Pray for both the public and private lives of all Christian Ministers, that they may be clearly seen as servants of Christ, bearing His image.

Thine image, Lord, bestow,
Thy presence and thy love;
I ask to serve thee here below,
And reign with thee above.

John Newton (1725-1807)
Olney Hymns, Book 1, Hymn XXXIII
Behold the throne of grace! (verse 6)

SECRETARY'S NEWSLETTER: No.96: Spring 2023

From the Secretary:

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The Hymn Society Website: www.hymnsocietygbi.org.uk

Impending resignation of Secretary

After twenty years, nearly 80 Newsletters, and having organized, together with Jenny, some eighteen Conferences (it would have been twenty had it not been for the Covid pandemic), including the 2015 Cambridge International Conference, I have, albeit reluctantly, concluded that it is time to 'pass on the baton'.

This is a consequence, partly of age and the inevitable diminishment of competence which goes with it, the increasing size of the task (largely, it has to be said, one of my own making) but, primarily, the way in which technology is increasingly dominating life. Zoom has proved a boon to many, especially during the pandemic. I, however, find it entirely uncongenial and possess neither the facility nor the ability to engage in it. I find it a sad reflection on 21st century life that people prefer to text rather than talk and opt to Zoom because they are too busy to travel and meet face-to-face. I fully realize that in this respect I may be an out-of-touch dinosaur and I also recognize that this could be to the detriment of the Society and impeding to its progress – hence the inevitability of my resignation, perhaps slightly earlier than it might otherwise have been.

I have prepared a 6½ page profile covering the present general duties of the Secretary as I have undertaken them. However, the organisation of Conference is an additional enterprise all of its own!

The task of Secretary nowadays requires a variety of skills and attributes, but these can easily be divided into 'bite-sized portions' and undertaken by several people. If you think you might be able to help please get in touch, either with me, the Executive President Janet Wootton (Email: revjwootton@btconnect.com), or Executive President Elect, Martin Leckebusch (Email: martin.leck@zoho.eu).

A request to discover the provenance of a 'Greek air'

Our member, John Crothers, writes:

I wonder if members might be able to help me trace the real origin of the hymn tune variously known in the British Isles as SALAMIS or ATHENS and in the USA as LUKE or SWEET STORY?

What is already known, from research at the British Library and the Royal College of Music: Mrs Jemima Luke set the melody in 1841 to her reflective children's hymn, 'I think, when I read that sweet story of old', having heard it used as a "marching tune" for the children of the Normal Infants' school, Grays Inn Road, Holborn, London. The hymn originally had three stanzas of eight lines each and the metre is usually described as 'irregular'.

I find it somewhat implausible that this gentle tune, with its irregular metre, could ever have been successfully used as a march. What is more, it is described in most hymnals as 'a Greek air'; the problem is that it in no way resembles any music that I personally associate with Greece. In fact, the music has the lyrical characteristics of a 'made-to-measure' tune, although it has undergone various permutations in different hymn collections, something which might rather point to its origin as a folk song. No composer's name is given; in the British Isles, its arrangement depended on the editor of the hymn book concerned. In this connection, W.B. Bradbury was the arranger of choice in the USA, although he changed the text into six stanzas of four lines each, adapting the tune accordingly.

Can anyone point me to the earliest edition of this tune and its true origins? Many thanks in anticipation of the solution to a truly puzzling conundrum!

Interestingly, Vaughan Williams, in the *English Hymnal* (1906), set the three stanzas of this text to EAST HORNDON, one of the many English folk tunes he introduced to the Church. This particular one, however, has sunk without trace – understandably, given its banal nature and the fact that it in no way conveys the reflective spirit of the text. (It strikes me as one of those cases where RVW tried, rather too hard, to avoid 'sentimentality' – in this case, the sentimentality of a supposed 'Greek air'!)

John can be contacted via the Secretary or directly at:
Email: john_crothers@hotmail.com

Secretary's Note: there seems to have been some Greek immigration to 19th century London, including the building of the Greek necropolis at Norwood (1842) and a Greek school and Orthodox church (1877).

We welcome new members who recently joined the Society:

Mr Olumide Dada (Gravesend, Kent)
Mr Thomas Doak (Linford, Hampshire)
Mrs Carol Rose (Longridge, Lancashire)
Mr Martin White (Horsham, West Sussex)

We regret having to report the deaths of members:

Revd Michael Forster (Loughborough, Leicestershire)
Emeritus Professor Colin Gibson (Dunedin, New Zealand)
Mr William Llewellyn (Colyton, Devon)
Revd Dr Carlton R. (Sam) Young (Tennessee, USA)

Between them, these four deaths represent a formidable presence in, and loss to, the realm of hymnody.

Michael Forster died 23rd April aged 76. He was a member with us for only a few years, but he was a prolific hymnwriter with some 483 listings on HymnQuest. A URC minister, he arrived there via the Baptist ministry, having first been born into an Anglican family. An ecumenical spirit, multi-talented, his hymns have enriched many denominations both here and overseas.

Colin Gibson, a truly delightful New Zealander, died in Dunedin aged 89 on 10th December 2022. He possessed that rare quality of being equally gifted with both words and music. He provided many tunes for his friend and compatriot, Shirley Erena Murray, delivering the eulogy at her funeral in 2020. He was a lecturer at our Conference in both 2008 and 2011.

William (Bill) Llewellyn died on 1st January aged 97. His membership of the Society dates back prior to 1966. Appointed to Charterhouse in 1950 as assistant master to John Wilson, he succeeded him fifteen years later and, in 1984, became the school's Second Master. His publications include *The Novello Book of Carols* (1986) and *Worship in Song* (1997), the latter for the RSCM. He collaborated with his friend Timothy Dudley-Smith on a number of hymn collections.

Carlton R. Young, known to his friends as Sam, has for many years been an HSGBI Joint Member through HSUSC. He died on 21st May, aged 97. A Past-President of HSUSC he has, amongst other things, composed many hymn tunes (including WESTCHASE to Brian Wren's *Bring many names*) and was editor of two revisions of USA hymnals for Methodists. Most recently, he has contributed the Introduction to Nancy Graham's shortly-to-be-published book on Erik Routley.

It is hoped that it may be possible to publish a fuller appreciation of some of these friends in a future issue of the Bulletin.