

SECRETARY'S NEWSLETTER: No.104: Spring 2025

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

Annual General Meeting – Thursday 24th July at 11:15

Our AGM will, as usual, take place during our Conference, this year at Highgate House, Northamptonshire; if you are not attending Conference but wish to join us for the AGM you may, of course, do so. Further details will be found in this mailing. Please note in particular the call for nominations for election to our Executive Committee: we have three vacancies this year and, again, details of eligibility and the nomination process are in this mailing.

2025 Annual Conference Tuesday 22nd – Friday 25th July **Highgate House, Northamptonshire**

Although our official booking date of 30th April has now passed, it *may* still be possible for you to book a place if you hurry! Conference details are on our website; to investigate the option of a late booking contact our Treasurer, Michael Garland (michaelgarland368@btinternet.com), as soon as possible, please. (If we are able to offer you a place, you will need to pay the full fee on booking.)

2025 Festival of Hymns Thursday 24th July at 7:45pm **St Matthew's Church, Northampton**

The Festival of Hymns is part of the programme for Conference but is open to anyone, whether Conference attendees, members of The Hymn Society or neither. If you are within reach of Northampton, please do come along for an evening of good singing (and bring your friends!). The commentator will be Revd Canon Michael Garland; the organist will be Tom Moore, organist at St Matthew's. The programme has yet to be announced but there is one clue: Michael has pointed out that the Festival date is the 300th anniversary of the birth of John Newton.

Subscription Renewals 2025

Most Hymn Society subscriptions are renewable each January. Many members now pay by Standing Order for which we are very grateful. UK rates remain at £25.00 (individual members; £30.00 for couples) with varying rates for those living outside the UK and Ireland. Additional supplements can include IAH (£10.00), HSUSC (£20.00), or both. Payment of any outstanding 2024 subscriptions would be most welcome. Please raise any questions on your subscription status with our Treasurer, Michael Garland (michaelgarland368@btinternet.com).

Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology – a reminder

Membership of The Hymn Society includes complimentary access to the Canterbury Dictionary (<https://hymnology.hymnsam.co.uk/>) which consists (at their own last count) of '6,193 entries and 3,583,539 words' and is 'the only comprehensive dictionary of global Hymnody.' Its entries are well worth exploring. There is a link, with login details, on the Members' section of our own website.

We welcome new members who recently joined the Society:

Professor Dr Siering Timm (Wirsberg, GERMANY)
Dr Paul Tarling (Mannheim, GERMANY)
Stephen and Amanda Thiselton (Cheltenham)

We regret having to report the death of members:

Dr Noeme Willem Visser (Noord-Scharwoude, NETHERLANDS)
Mr Jim Ransome (Colchester)
Dr Ada Kadelbach (Westerland, GERMANY)

Dr Kadelbach and Dr Visser were both joint members through IAH, in Dr Visser's case for fifteen years. Dr Kadelbach was a musicologist and hymnologist whose doctorate was on Mennonite hymns in North America.

We also note the death earlier this year of **Simon Lindley**, who was one of the committee for the *Revised English Hymnal*. Although not a member of the Society, Simon visited our Lincoln Conference (2023) where he supplied us with a handout introducing the then forthcoming REH. Simon was also Conductor at the 1987 Act of Praise, when he welcomed the Society to Leeds Parish Church.

Gordon Giles writes: 'Simon was born in 1948, the son of a clergyman and a Bletchley Park code breaker. He served as organist at St Albans

Cathedral, but most significantly as Director of Music at Leeds Parish Church (now Minster), 1975-2016. He was simultaneously City Organist.

'Simon was a member of many trusts and organisations, and had served as Chairman of the Ecclesiastical Music Trust since 2004, a role which enabled him to offer support that was more than financial to musicians around the country, fostering and encouraging burgeoning generations. He took personal interest in all of the applications for grants received and kept in touch diligently and authentically.

'Simon was also a Director of the English Hymnal Company, and a musical editor of the supplement *New English Praise* in 2006. More recently, and ultimately he was one of three musical editors of the *Revised English Hymnal*, a project he saw completed if not fully published. Consequently his fellow editors have dedicated the Melody Edition to his memory in tribute to his long and deep commitment to and contribution to English Hymnody. Both *NEP* and *REH* include his work as composer and arranger.

'Nevertheless it is as a caring and loyal friend, as well as a committed and faithful Christian that we remember and give thanks for Simon's life, musical ministry and service. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.'

Previously in Coventry ... *Rejoice and Sing* LIVE

Gillian Warson and Michael Garland write: 'The Hymn Society was well represented for this event celebrating thirty-five years of *Rejoice and Sing*, held on Saturday 3rd May at the Methodist Central Hall, Coventry. There were upwards of 140 people present including an enthusiastic choir of thirty-six voices.

'The organisers were certainly ambitious in their planning. Nineteen hymns, along with short presentations, a panel discussion, bible readings, prayers, and a video recording, were programmed to fit into a two-hour schedule! Inevitably, the timing went awry, but this must not detract from what was otherwise a significant and important gathering.

'Six of the hymns were firm favourites from centuries past, which felt generous. Fortunately, we were able to pay tribute to contemporary authors and musicians who are well represented in the pages of

Rejoice and Sing, including notable members, past and present, of The Hymn Society: Alan Gaunt, Fred Kaan, Caryl Micklem and Brian Wren.

'A highlight of the afternoon was the introduction of a new hymn by Dominic Grant, each verse beginning: "Rejoice and Sing!" No doubt there will be an ongoing debate as to whether the word "compendium", used in the first verse, should be contracted to three syllables, rather than four, to fit the overworked tune, WOODLANDS.

'Overall, an enjoyable occasion, but one in which those called to speak should not have felt the pressure of time caused by the sheer quantity of hymns. We say this as hymn enthusiasts ourselves!'

Forthcoming in Coventry ... IN HARMONY Free Church Choirs: Festival of Church Music, Coventry Cathedral, 11th October

This biennial event is open to all who love singing and brings together singers from across the UK. The theme of the 2025 festival is 'Justice and Freedom' and our own Executive President, Martin Leckebusch, has been invited to preside.

Singers who would like to participate as part of the choir are invited to purchase a Festival Anthem Book which contains all the anthems and hymns to be sung at the festival, and to attend at least one regional rehearsal plus the combined rehearsal on the day of the festival. For further details and to buy the Festival Anthem Book, visit <https://www.freechurchchoirs.org.uk/>.

Did you know ...?

Next year will be the Society's 90th anniversary. If you have any suggestions of how we could mark this auspicious milestone, please do contact any of the Officers.

Postscript: Christopher Idle remembers ...

'When I was Rector of Limehouse in the 1980s, more than once the London Marathon ran past our church (St Anne's). One year I attached a large home-made banner to a tree in the churchyard, saying "Run the straight race through God's good grace!" Of the 20,000 or so runners, just one wrote to thank me afterwards! One or two others must have seen it; we didn't get on telly, but thank you Mr Monsell, for your once-famous hymn, "Fight the good fight". Does anyone sing it now, I wonder?'