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### What is Praxis?

See [www.praxisworship.org.uk](http://www.praxisworship.org.uk)  
Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

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### Affiliation

The work that Praxis does is supported mainly by affiliation. If you are not an affiliate, why not consider becoming one?

# 'Darling, they're playing our tune!'

The Church of England is eager to nurture faith that impacts upon the lives people live beyond the walls of the church. This has been described in national initiatives such as *Setting God's People Free* and in local diocesan strategies. In the Diocese of Leeds our strategy is focussed upon the whole body of Christ living as confident Christians, growing churches and transforming communities. However this can be a challenge when there often appears to be little obvious relationship between Sunday worship and the life lived through the rest of the week. This has been one of the most important drivers in the development of the worship in the Rock Mass, an Alt:Worship service in North Halifax, over the course of the last twelve years.

In 2007 I began to explore the psychology of music in worship as part of an MA at St John's College in Durham. Professor John Sloboda uses the phrase 'Darling, they're playing our tune!' in his work in this area to demonstrate how music has the power to take us from where we are into a past experience, place or time. For example, every time my wife Ruth and I hear the pop punk version of 'Stand By Me' by Pennywise we are transported instantly back to the point 20 years ago when we walked down the aisle and out of church as husband and wife. We are reminded of the presence of God within our relationship, and something mundane becomes sacred. There is a pause: a point where we are once again in the presence of God in our daily life and continuing our journey with him.

This psychological principle has guided the development of musical

worship at Rock Mass. Over the years, we have been repurposing 'secular music' for worship: creating and using contemporary musical resources whilst combining them with stimulating visuals within the context of a high mass. This is not a show but a truly communal event, as people bring their gifts, and combine them within one event. It has sprung out of the love Ruth and I have for playing, writing and rewriting rock music, and our own experience of the profoundly sacred within 'secular' songs.

Much has already been written on the relationship between the church and modern music in the twentieth century. From the decrying of Elvis in the 50s and the almost visceral reaction to rock music in free churches in the 80s and 90s, the relationship between modern music and the church has often been what we can euphemistically call 'strained'. Yet many rock musicians also speak openly of their own personal faith, and the lyrics of many others speak of spiritual longing and questing.

Personally, I look to the ancient psalmist's writings: 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it'. Where do we find God in the words of the contemporary world and bring them into church as part of our worship? How do we send people into the world to rediscover God in the supermarket on a Wednesday evening when they hear Florence and The Machine singing 'You've got the love I need to see me through' on the frozen food aisle?

✠ Robb Sutherland is Vicar of Mixenden and Illingworth.

# Fresh Expressions

## The Nursery Rhyme Mass: a childish approach to worship

Worship with children, especially sacramental worship with children, needs to tread a fine line between accessibility for the participants and authenticity to the faith which is manifest in worship. Within the canon of Fresh Expressions, there have been many innovative gatherings which have struggled to find this balance, and the challenges of Messy Communion, for example, in moving from gathering to sacrament have been well documented ([www.messychurch.org.uk/tags/eucharist](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/tags/eucharist)).

The Nursery Rhyme Mass (NRM) is an ongoing, collaborative initiative to enable authentic expression of the sacramental but in idioms that are appropriate to children from pre-school to school year 6 (age 10/11). By reinterpreting the liturgical structure of *Common Worship* and by reworking age-appropriate rhymes set to traditional nursery rhyme tunes, a new liturgy is formed which is identifiably Anglican and yet owned by young people.

Brian Ogden published a series of nativity plays set to nursery rhymes (*Nursery Rhyme Nativities*, BRF, 2002) and this provided the springboard for parish youth workers and priest to collaborate in creating this nursery rhyme liturgy. The key challenge was in the representation of each individual element of the liturgical structure with a suitable rhyme, and then to find appropriate tunes. Many of the rhymes simply fell together with little effort and then were modified in practice, either to improve the rhyming scheme or to enhance the theological message.

So in an act of penitence, set to the tune of 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', after absolution there is a resounding song of thanks to 'If you're happy and you know it...' which culminates in a powerful 'If you believe that God forgives you, say "We do..." "WE DO!" they all shout. Such liturgical elements can be frequently reused in collective worship, which (much to the approval of SIAMS inspectors) emphasises the connection of school collective worship to the wider worshipping community with full gathering songs, penitential rites, intercessions and Trinitarian blessings borrowed directly from the NRM. Although

a whole Eucharist Prayer was written (to the tune of 'Kum Ba Yah') it was replaced initially by the excellent Roman Prayer 2 for children and now by one of the *Common Worship* additional Eucharistic Prayers.

Coming from a distinctly Anglican sacramental tradition, the NRM unashamedly seeks to express this Anglican charism within its texts, speaking of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and evoking images and metaphors consistent with liberal Anglo-Catholicism. In an age when certain powerfully rich Evangelical strands can enforce their own spin on Anglicanism through their materials, this is a subtle, low-tech and under-resourced response. Churches uncomfortable with the praying of the 'Hail Mary' during the intercessions may simply omit it, for this Creative Commons-released project encourages local adaptation and refinement which can feed back into the project and enrich it. No copyright is claimed on the materials and they are freely available on the website, [www.nurseryrhymemass.org.uk](http://www.nurseryrhymemass.org.uk).

It can be employed with little or no additional resource. The songs are always sung a cappella. As a priest quite comfortable with the use of multimedia, I usually use slides for the liturgy, but as demonstrated when the school projector was out of action, the children quickly absorbed the words and demonstrated that they didn't actually need the text. A screen is much more engaging than a printed sheet of rhymes, and these should be avoided as far as possible.

The NRM is used weekly in a Church of England primary school, and frequently as the liturgy of a Family Mass aimed at pre-schoolers. In school, in their own time, between 8 and 20 young people participate and communicate weekly. This is connected to a parish ethos which is more concerned with administering the sacraments of salvation than preventing access to them: a completely open table is practised and all children, regardless of baptism, admission to communion, or confirmation are invited to communicate. However, for safeguarding reasons, in school, communion is received in only one kind (the host) unless a child has been formally admitted to Holy Communion. Other churches in the UK, Australia and Canada have also adopted its use, and contributions and refinements are received from far and wide.

The use of the NRM has greatly increased the decisions of unbaptised children to seek

baptism of their own volition, for families to find deeper and lasting connection with the church following baptism, and for young people to further engage in Admission to Holy Communion and Confirmation (depending upon age). In my own parish, children who receive First Communion are strongly encouraged to continue to participate in sacramental worship from that point onwards. The NRM has been used successfully at all-age masses with positive response from both adults and children communicants.

So, if we are to proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation, then we should be prepared to use tools which are both authentic to our spirituality and theological expression but which are couched in language, metaphors and style that reaches the participants. I pray that this will continue to grow and enable even more young people to meet with Christ in his most holy and blessed sacrament.

✉ *Simon Rundell is parish priest of Bickleigh and Shaugh Prior, Plymouth.*

## The 'why, when, how, who, what and wheres' of eucharistic celebrations in Fresh Expressions of Church

This short article flags some of the pertinent issues for Fresh Expressions of Church (fxoc) seeking to celebrate the Eucharist.

### Why would fxoc celebrate the Eucharist?

In short, because Jesus told us to! The Eucharist gives thanks and glory to God, and builds up the church community. It is also food for the journey. As symbol it can communicate God's grace in a non-verbal age that cries out for authentic transformative experiences. As church for people not yet members of church, fxoc bear the DNA of mature expressions of church. One mark of this DNA is celebrating the Eucharist. A Fresh Expression should have the inbuilt potential to become a eucharistic community.

### When should fxoc start celebrating the Eucharist?

Not all fxoc should celebrate the Eucharist from the outset. The core leadership team should be regularly involved

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in eucharistic worship, and eucharistic DNA and values should be intentionally expressed in the life of the fxoc from the start, even if the explicit celebration of it isn't. This suggests a community that gives thanks in the midst of brokenness, shares life and food generously, explores symbols and sacraments, and seeks transformation and wholeness.

The more frequently a fxoc meets, the more likely it is to become eucharistic. Monthly fxoc grow numerically at a similar rate to weekly fxoc but mature more slowly, and tend to take longer to become eucharistic (*The Day of Small Things*, Church Army, 2016). This makes sense. Weekly fxoc have more opportunities to explore the breadth of discipleship and mission, hence more opportunities for celebrating the Eucharist, and disciples maturing at a faster rate. It should not need saying that there are seven days in a week, and fxoc should not feel constrained to Sundays as the only valid time a eucharistic celebration can take place.

## How should fxoc celebrate the Eucharist?

We would do well to remember that whenever Jesus broke bread, he did so as a guest with borrowed bread. Eucharists in fxoc need to be both faithful to the living tradition of the Church and resonant to their context, seeking to offer the gift of the Eucharist in a way that can be received, yet still be transformational. This involves holding several polarities in tension: inclusivity and integrity to truth; hospitality and challenge; resonance with context and rootedness in the tradition; beauty and brokenness. We cannot afford to avoid wrestling with these tensions by hiding behind inaccessible churchiness on one hand or offering bland banalities robbed of any kingdom content on the other. I would suggest that we need to move from a rules-based approach to liturgy to a values-based one. Such a move calls for tenacity and vulnerability.

## Who should preside?

Given that most fxoc are lay-led, and that in the Church of England the presiding minister at a Eucharist must be an ordained priest, we have an obvious problem. Turning an episcopal blind eye to lay presidency cannot be the solution, but neither is parachuting in a priest with no real connection to the fxoc to do the magic bits. One would hope that fxoc would produce

their own vocations, but that will take time. In the meantime it might be possible to release some gifted priests, perhaps OPMs, to be sacramental chaplains to lay-led fxoc. These pioneer chaplains would respect the lay leadership, and also be thoroughly rooted in the eucharistic traditions of the Church. A partnership could then develop to forge eucharistic liturgies faithful to the tradition yet resonant with the context.

## What liturgies can be used?

Here is the real rub. The logic of an incarnational missional approach is towards freedom to contextualize eucharistic values into a form that resonates in a particular context. This invites creativity, imagination and a thorough grounding in the living tradition of the Church. This might mean, for example, a eucharistic meal. But there are real legal constraints here that limit what can be done. *Common Worship* affords some flexibility; but that flexibility reduces the closer you get to bread and wine. There is also something of a postcode lottery at work in relation to which dioceses will tolerate what. I suggest that we need to review the Canons governing worship to allow for faithful improvisation based on good theology and sacramental missional values. ✠ *Johnnie Parkin is a priest in the United Parish of the Trinity, South Grantham.*

## Liturgical hacking

I want to put forward the notion of liturgical hacking. I appreciate the word 'hack' has some negative connotations. But one definition of a 'hack' is a solution to a specific computing problem. This quickly got extended to 'life hacks' – creative solutions to problems in everyday life, usually exploring the limits of what is possible. But it is particularly the spirit in which it is done that is interesting – there is an ethos or ethic of sharing, openness, and decentralisation. This is in contrast with a world of competitive advantage or heavily-centralised control. Hacking assumes that information should be shared in an open source fashion so that someone else can access it, take it apart and reassemble it to make something new or repurposed which is then shared with the wider community as gift.

It seems also that this could be a fantastic metaphor for creativity in the Church – making available liturgies and practices to be imaginatively played with to arrive

at a new and fresh takes on things, rather than having boundaries to be defended by a centralised committee. In practice a lot of us are doing this with cut and paste – sampling and remixing with the broader shapes of *Common Worship* – from what is out there, created by others. But I think it can also be pushed a step further, to engage imaginatively with the rubrics of the Church. For example, in *Common Worship*, Note 7 on A Service of the Word suggests that the term sermon may be opened up in all sorts of creative ways (and may be omitted other than in principal services). Or Canon B5, 'Of the discretion of ministers in conduct of public prayer', recognises the discretion of ministers to be able to make appropriate variations according to particular circumstances – for the sake of inculturation for pioneers, for example. And if a service is not the Principal Service, then everything loosens up. These circumstances invite liturgical hacking.

Worship curating and leading is about world-making. Liturgical hacking can be a tactic to make a world that is different from the dominant world on offer, leveraging open cracks in the surface to slip through for the sake of the gospel.

✠ *Jonny Baker is Director of Mission Education for the Church Mission Society and leads the pioneer training.*

## Messy liturgy

'It was good, but a bit boring in the middle. I mean, I'm 23 and I found it took too long, so what did the 4-year-olds think?' This comment came from a helper at January's Southwark Splash Messy Church Baptism in Southwark Cathedral. It was a wonderful morning, with more than 20 activities to explore the story of Jesus' baptism, followed by the baptism of three girls, the first full-immersion baptism to take place in the Cathedral.

To give you an idea of the difference between what, perhaps, you might take for granted and what some Messy Church helpers find normal, one of them laughed, describing how she had to get her vicar to explain what the symbols of water, light and oil all mean in baptism before she could lead her activity of making bracelets and keyrings with different-coloured beads.

The planning team, drawn from the Diocese and from Messy Church, with help from the Precentor, worked hard to create

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a celebration of baptism in which families of all ages, even those at the very start of faith journeys, (including those who can't read yet), would be able to participate, and which would help everyone into the sense of awe and wonder, connection with God and each other, and journeying that good liturgy provides.

And in the 23-year-old's comment above, that the spoken part of the liturgy was still too wordy and lengthy for some, lies the tension of trying to be faithfully Anglican in a context with many non-Anglicans. The Messy congregation members (and team members) might have no church background at all. They will probably never go to a service of Morning Prayer. Liturgy, in this context, is not shaping people by regular use. It serves a different purpose, and therefore needs framing differently.

My experience of trying to remain faithful to the principles of Anglican liturgy in a Fresh Expressions context is that tradition tends to shake its head pityingly at any suggestion that there could be a new way of expressing ancient truths, or that the people belonging to today's congregations have something different to bring into worship to create 'the work of the people'. There is an assumption that reimagining liturgy means dumbing it down, rather than releasing a dam to let living water flow. What if we could worship God in the spirit of Anglican liturgy, rather than keeping the letter of its law?

Many new traditions of Church simply ignore regulations and do their own thing. We longed instead for Messy Churches to be one of the means by which the Anglican liturgy could be refreshed in a two-way conversation between the old and new. Given the tiny ripple of the Messy Church voice against the immutable iceberg of Anglican liturgical tradition, I'm beginning to think breaking the rules might actually be a more godly and compassionate way forward! Like Jesus healing on the Sabbath, we need to find the deep truths of good liturgical practice hidden beneath mere human conventions. It would be an act of grace to do this together.

✠ *Lucy Moore is the founder of Messy Church.*

## Led by the Spirit

Led by the Spirit is a bi-monthly Fresh Expression at All Saints, High Wycombe. It takes place on a Sunday evening, and was born out of a desire for

a eucharistic service with contemporary worship music which blended charismatic renewal with the riches of Catholic spirituality, inspired by the On Fire Mission conference, Sanctum Connect, and similar ventures.

The focus of the service is the Eucharist: vestments are worn and incense is used, and the altar party typically includes three eucharistic ministers, acolytes, thurifer, crucifer and so on. The music is provided by our worship band, and we always include a time of prayer ministry and anointing. One of the premises of the service was to branch out beyond our regular staff team and congregation, and so the upfront roles are occupied by different people each time, and comprise a mixture of All Saints people joined by guests both local and national, as well as ordinands from Ripon College, Cuddesdon, with whom we have a strong training link. It has proved to be a great way to get new people involved in serving up front, reading, and leading intercessions, particularly from our youth groups.

We always invite a guest preacher, and this year have broadened this to guest practitioner, enabling people to help plan and lead new liturgies and share their ideas and praxis with us. Past preachers have included Dave Tomlinson, Beverley Mason, Robb Sutherland and Laura McAdam, and practitioners have included Eddie Green and Jonnie Parkin. Guests later in 2019 include Anna Norman-Walker, Sue Wallace, Jayne Ozanne and Steven Croft.

Now in its fourth year, Led by the Spirit has grown a brand new congregation of about 75 regulars and continues to grow; these include many clergy, ordinands and others who say this has been their most profound worship experience in years. All are welcome – see [www.allsaintshighwycombe.org](http://www.allsaintshighwycombe.org) or our social media channels for more details: @AllSaintsHW

✠ *Liam Cartwright is Director of Music and Area Leader for Mission and Evangelism, All Saints' High Wycombe.*

## Liturgical use of projectors and screens

An increasing number of churches are embracing the use of screen technology for liturgical worship. In the past such technology was principally used for the display of song words in periods of contemporary sung worship. The needs of a gathering rooted in words, response and

movement can be quite different.

The placement of screens is the first consideration. They need to be located in a way that does not block the visual focus of the worship space. Equally they need to be of a size and number so as to be clearly seen by all members of the congregation, including those leading the service (musicians and sacred ministers), and flexible enough to enable liturgical movement (for gathering around the font or facing west for the dismissal.)

Much of the software used to drive screens in worship is ill-suited for the presentation of liturgy. PowerPoint however can produce clear 'pages' that reflect the textual layout that congregations are accustomed to. Text should be on a dark background (blue or black), and congregational responses in yellow. Transitions and animations should be used sparingly. Use of images, loops and video can be powerful but should never compete with the text: it is better to have images and text side-by-side. A free-to-use template is available at <http://www.signandspirit.com/2016/03/worshpr-powerpoint-template.html>

Well-formatted PowerPoint slides will take into account readability of text at the furthest points from the screen, and with suitable printer settings can form booklets for those who find screens difficult to look at. The legacy of the *Prayer Book* is to present the whole liturgy to the people, so sacred ministers do not need a separate altar book.

Smooth control of the liturgy is vital. A good quality laptop with an SSD, i5 CPU and 16gb of RAM is a minimum. The laptop is best situated close to the altar party, with a server given the role of changing slides. This individual needs to have good liturgical sense: the flow of worship can be harmed by the task being undertaken badly. As always things can go wrong, but the intention should be to do things well.

At All Saints we have found that the use of screens enables engagement from the congregation, especially for people who are not used to church. A screen over the font has transformed baptism services, and the screens are requested for the majority of weddings and funerals.

✠ *Edward Green is Vicar of All Saints, Leavesden.*

A copy of this article with illustrations of PowerPoint slides is available at [www.praxisworship.org.uk/resources](http://www.praxisworship.org.uk/resources)

# Books & other media

## ***Did the Anglicans and Roman Catholics agree on the Eucharist?***

Colin Buchanan, Pickwick Publications, Oregon, 2018.

This book is a bit like a detective story, digging away at evidence which is sometimes not easy to interpret and sometimes overlaid and partially hidden with emotional hopes, misunderstandings and historical prejudice. Like a careful detective, Colin Buchanan provides – in one volume of just under two hundred pages, with superb bibliography and index – all the major texts, with a detailed analysis of them, set in an informative and thorough sketch of their background history. And like many detective stories there is an unexpected ‘bolt from the blue’ dénouement which calls the whole plot into question.

There are large and important questions here. Clearly some arise from the four centuries of division set out by Colin Buchanan: were all the issues resolved in the ARCIC process? A detailed examination of the texts would seem to indicate that the initial welcome for the Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine, 1971, and the very real longing on both sides that there should be agreement, masked a series of issues which the subsequent documents left unresolved; the very names ‘Elucidations’ and ‘Clarifications’ indicate something of the struggle. But the questions are not just those of post-Reformation theology, but about the methodology of the process used. Having started out with a process involving discussion and agreement of the ARCIC statements by, for example, diocesan synods in the Church of England, leading to formal ratification by the relevant bodies in the two Communion, it felt as if both Communion got too tired (or confused?) to pursue the process to the end. So does it matter that the statements on the Eucharist have never been formally ratified in the way some expected? Or does reception happen in some other, less legalistic, way in the post-modern church? By enabling us to see how the process has worked, Colin Buchanan has probably ensured that it will not be tackled in quite the same way again. So are we at the end of the grand era of ecumenical dialogue about reunion? One of the really helpful things

about this book is that it paints such an accurate historical picture: we can see how times have changed since the heady and optimistic days of post-war ecumenism, of Archbishop Michael Ramsey’s visit to Pope Paul VI with their joint Declaration opening the door to dialogue between two worldwide Communion.

This is where the *deus ex machina* dénouement of our detective story comes in. The book was with the publisher in early 2018, with the conclusion that the answer to the question in the title was ‘No, they did not... but it is doubtful whether they knew they had not agreed’, when the ARCIC III report *Walking in the Way* was produced. This new statement, seven years in the making, reviews and integrates all the work of the previous statements in such a way as to open the door for more open and substantial agreement, perhaps even to the kind of ‘Declaration’ discussed in the book. To find out more, buy the book!

✉ *Trevor Lloyd is a former Archdeacon of Barnstaple.*

As this book is published in the USA, Colin is both promoting and selling it over here. The list-price of £21 he, with author’s discount, will bring down to £15 (postage included) for UK purchasers. E-mail him on: cobdleeds@btinternet.com.

## ***Alternative Collects:***

*Prayers to a disruptive and compassionate God,*  
Graham Turner, Sacristy Press, 2018

‘A collect is a carefully constructed prayer, the origins of which date back to the fifth century. It has a distinctive rhythmical pattern, and a particular literary style. Collects begin with an address followed by a clause referring to an attribute – “God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful”. The clause is the grounds for a petition – “watch over us and hold us all the days of our life”. The ending is often a Trinitarian doxology, although the shorter additional collects offer something simpler like “through Jesus Christ our Lord”.’ (Bridget Nichols in *Companion to Common Worship Vol 1*, edited by Paul Bradshaw SPCK, 2001)

Graham Turner, author of *Alternative Collects*, suggests that many people are ambivalent about collects, partly because the prayer passes us by too quickly, and partly because it is too general.

His prayers attempt to overcome this predictability and challenge the form. Therefore his alternative collects do not follow the traditional structure of address, acknowledgement, request, aspiration and plea.

I learnt most about collects as a member of the writing group and then Synodical steering group for the *Common Worship: Additional Collects*, one of which, the collect for Mothering Sunday, I have cited above to demonstrate the genre. Turner’s prayers are not collects in the traditional sense. Nor are they authorised to replace the Anglican collect, one of the few liturgical ‘must-haves’ in canon law.

As prayers they are a mixed bag. Turner has written them to introduce elements of risk, hope, challenge and creativity linked to the readings over the three-year lectionary cycle. Some are stunning prayers in the style of contemporary liturgical writing. They are less pithy than the psalm prayers, but with a similar bent towards social justice. But others meander or are too focused and specific for prayer in a congregational context.

Turner suggests that they can be adapted, and with that caveat I have certainly found them valuable in my personal devotions and for occasional midweek congregational use. But even if these alternative collects were authorised, I would hesitate to use them on Sundays.

The *Common Worship* rubric for Order One is clear. A time of silence precedes the collect, following a specific bidding to pray. It is not until we still ourselves as a gathered community that the prayerfulness and poetry of the collects of *BCP* and *Common Worship* shine. A collect is a thing of beauty, a reflection of the many traditions reflected in the Church of England as we join together in prayer and unite in worship.

✉ *Dana Delap is Team Vicar in the Vale and Cotswold Edge benefice.*

## ***From Cosmos to Canaan:***

*The Bible in Verse,*  
Jock Stein, Sacristy Press, 2018

‘A book for anyone who doesn’t know where to start with the Old Testament’ – thus ends the write-up on the back cover of this book by Jock Stein. The theological world is hardly short of introductions to Scripture and various

# Books

parts of it, but this is like nothing I've previously encountered. The author set out at first to write a poem for each book of the Bible and found a vocation to write poetry at 70 years old – this volume covers the 'Hexateuch' (i.e. Genesis through Joshua). The author says he loves 'crossing boundaries and tearing up labels'. I identify strongly with that, and found this refreshingly impossible to categorise. There is plenty of theology in its pages, often expressed poetically, but little direct engagement with liturgy – not that the author makes any such claim.

Each chapter is written in a kind of dialogue with a friend named Jean, and the conversation is interspersed with poems relating to a passage from the book concerned. The 'friend' often asks quite challenging questions, which are sometimes addressed poetically, and the ensuing debate can be stimulating and thought-provoking. That's well and good for sermon prep and personal study, and some of the poems will be helpful in shining a different light on the biblical text, but is this a liturgical volume?

Much will depend on how you see liturgy, and poetry as resource within it. Beyond that, we will all respond differently to the author's style and use of language. Some I found entertainingly perceptive:

Did Moses ever laugh? Did

Miriam joke with Aaron?

And what about the quarrels:

Could Moses keep his hair on?

Others are challenging:

Who listens to the voice of God

when life is bare and dry?

It takes a Moses and a call

to set a man on fire.

I certainly enjoyed journeying through *From Cosmos to Canaan*. Its insights may sometimes feel a bit left-field, but that's a bonus for me. I will surely quote it occasionally in sermons, and I suspect there will be liturgical occasions when something less wordy and predictable has the most impact. You probably won't regret buying this book, and if you do, my guess is that it will feature in worship from time to time.

✍️ *Stuart Thomas is Rector of Frimley.*

## **Grove Worship W237 Celebrating the Ascension:**

*Reclaiming the Missional Focus of Ascensiontide,*  
Charles Read

After the excitement and busyness of Easter, Ascension Day can get overlooked. This is made worse if we are keen to get on with the church calendar and celebrate Pentecost and the gift of the Spirit. This practical guide to the biblical setting and liturgical basis of Ascension Day examines what can be done to help us celebrate this event in the life of Jesus, and asks what opportunities and challenges the story presents for us.

## **Alcuin/GROW Joint Liturgical Studies**

Joint Liturgical Study 87-88 will be a double-size JLS (which should be published in May) by Colin Buchanan and Trevor Lloyd, *The Eucharist in the Church of England since 1958*. Colin and Trevor between them served on the Liturgical Commission from 1964 to 2002, and on the General Synod and its Revision Committees from 1970 to 2004. So they have seen the whole process from the world of Uniformity of 1662 with simply the *Book of Common Prayer* through to *Common Worship 2000* – and the *Additional Prayers* of 2012. The Study is 128 pages long and gives first a chronicled account of the various stages of revision, then in a second part provides a thematic treatment of the revising of each of the elements of the liturgical text as they have been shaped and tweaked into their present form.

# Music matters

## **RSCM honour for Andrew Reid**

Among those to receive Honorary Awards from the Royal School of Church Music at its Celebration Day service later in 2019 is former Director of the RSCM, Andrew Reid. He is now the Managing Director of Durham-based organ builders Harrison & Harrison; one of his organ teachers while a student in Cambridge was Peter Hurford OBE, who died on 3 March 2019 at the age of 88.

Andrew Reid became Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral in 1996, then Sub-Organist of Westminster Abbey in 2000, playing for the funeral of the Queen Mother among other major services. In 2004 he moved to Peterborough Cathedral as Director of Music, establishing a girls' choir there, and from 2012 to 2017 he headed up the RSCM. When interviewed for the *Church Times* not long after taking up that post, he said that if locked in a church, he would most like to be with 'someone who saw the humour and possibilities of the situation rather than the problems', and perhaps someone who would make music with him, 'for fun'.

The RSCM has recently published Reid's setting of the Easter Sequence *Victimae Paschali* for choir and organ, written for use in Westminster Cathedral. Sample pages can be viewed online ([www.rscmshop.com](http://www.rscmshop.com)).

## **Gettys' Belfast conference**

Another large conference with the aim of encouraging and deepening congregational worship by renewing the vision for singing will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, in August 2019 (<https://gettymusicworshipconference.com>). This year Getty Music has chosen the theme *Sing! The Life of Christ*, looking at how to build on the foundation of the gospel story in all that is sung in worship, and seeing how that story shapes the church's year.

A few of the same speakers and song writers will feature at the *Sing!* Belfast conference, hosted by Getty Music and New Irish Arts ([www.gettymusic.com/singbelfastconference](http://www.gettymusic.com/singbelfastconference)). This will take place on Friday 14 and Saturday 15 June, at

the Assembly Buildings in Belfast. Topics include congregational singing (Keith Getty), singing with children and families (Kristyn Getty), and 'The Glory of God and Why We Sing' (John Piper).

Following the conference, at 7.30 on the Saturday evening, a concert at the SSE Arena in Belfast will feature the New Irish Choir and Orchestra, along with Keith and Kristyn Getty accompanied by an American/Irish band. The Gettys are being honoured this year by the Royal School of Church Music, becoming Honorary Fellows of the RSCM (an award for achievements in church music or liturgy of international significance). Keith also received his OBE from the Queen at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh last summer.

## Stuart Townend

'How good it is to sing' is the title of a new song by Stuart Townend, Brenton Brown and Keith Getty, based on Psalm 147 and included in Townend's most recent album, *Courage*. On Stuart's website ([www.stuarttownend.co.uk](http://www.stuarttownend.co.uk)) he outlines the background to the writing of the song, which arose partly from his recent exploration, with the Gettys, of the 'hymnal of the Old Testament'. They have been looking at how the Psalms can inform our approach to congregational worship today and have produced a number of new psalm-based songs.

Also on the *Courage* album is 'Out of the depths (I will wait for you)', based on Psalm 130, which could be useful in Passiontide. Other tracks include a song which takes lines from an older hymn as a jumping-off point ('How shall I sing that majesty') and a setting of a Prayer of St Patrick ('Christ be with me') by Stuart Townend and two of his children, Emma and Joseph.

There is a new section on the Townend website called 'Preparing to lead', designed to help anyone planning and leading worship; despite not following the Church of England's lectionary, it may well suggest appropriate ideas for songs, hymns and prayers at certain times of year (there are currently resources for Lent on the site, for example). There are also thought-provoking quotations from the Confessions of St Augustine at the end of each list.

## Palms and Thorns

Part of Richard Hubbard's vision, through the Cantus Firmus Trust, is to organise imaginative acts of worship using a variety of music and other creative arts. He describes 'Palms and Thorns', reflections for Holy Week in music and drama, taking place in St Edmundsbury Cathedral at 5.30 p.m. on Palm Sunday, 14 April 2019, as 'somewhere between a church service, a concert and a play' (<https://cantusfirmus.org.uk/palmsandthorns.html>). Admission is free, and an offering will be taken.

The music will include items for the congregation to join in, as well as extracts from Handel's *Messiah*, songs from the Iona Community, and contemporary choral pieces sung by the Cantus Firmus Choir. There is an opportunity for those interested in drama to participate in a daytime workshop (improvised drama and mime) and then in the evening event; a donation of £10 is requested for this.

## Launde Abbey and Wydale Hall

A 'Great Celebration' is planned to mark the 900th anniversary this year of Launde Abbey, now a residential retreat house and conference centre supported by the Dioceses of Leicester and Peterborough. Launde Abbey was founded as an Augustinian priory in 1119 by Richard Basset, a royal official of Henry I. During the first century of its life the community buildings, cloister and garth were built; the one side chapel which still survives from the original imposing church is used as the Chapel for the present-day Abbey.

Launde Abbey's website ([www.laundeabbey.org.uk](http://www.laundeabbey.org.uk)) describes the festivities on Saturday 22 June 2019 (10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m.) as an 'Ancient Wells – Living Water' event. The day will begin with a service of celebration led by the Bishops of the two dioceses. The following day, Sunday 23 June, will see the choirs of Peterborough and Leicester Cathedrals singing together for the first time, in a service of Choral Evensong to be held in a marquee.

Looking further ahead, the Diocese of York's retreat and conference centre, Wydale Hall, will feature a day on congregational song as part of its 2019

programme ([www.wydale.org](http://www.wydale.org)). 'Finding Faith in the Song', on Thursday 3 October from 9.45 am to 4 pm, led by Mike Leigh and Chris White, is described as 'A day of singing that will explore the unique and beautiful relationship singing has with our faith in the living God'.

Both new and old songs will be sung by participants as part of a reflection on 'how singing can deepen our longing and hunger for God'. The cost is £25 per person, including lunch. Mike Leigh is sometimes known as the 'singing vicar' – he is a classically trained singer who performed with Opera North before preparing for ordination at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield.

## Roger Jones

Lee Abbey's programme of summer holiday weeks for 2019 includes the opportunity to rehearse and perform the musical *Wildfire* by Roger Jones; this tells the story of Stephen, first Christian martyr, as in the Acts of the Apostles. Singers and instrumentalists of all ages are welcome; the dates are Saturday 27 July to Saturday 3 August, and further details can be found on the Lee Abbey website (<https://leeabbeydevon.org.uk>).

A similar *Wildfire* week is being held at Scargill House in Yorkshire at the end of August, again with Roger Jones and his team (<https://scargillmovement.org>).

## Studying hymns

A recent addition to the resources available on the website of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland (<https://hymnsocietygbi.org.uk>) is a list of libraries that hold hymnology collections, with practical information such as opening hours and regulations concerning access to the books and archive material.

The Hymn Society's conference this year will take place in Canterbury from Tuesday 23 July to Thursday 25 July. Lecturers include the Iona Community's John Bell ('Whatever happened to Jesus in the Church's song?'), who will also conduct the Festival of Hymns in the Western Crypt of Canterbury Cathedral, and Christopher Gray, Director of Music at Truro Cathedral, who will present his research into the origins of Truro's service of Nine Lessons and Carols, first held in 1880 and devised by the Bishop of Truro, Edward White Benson (1829-1896).

# Events

## Inspiring Music in Worship

Thursday 6 June 2019

10 am – 3.30 pm

St Mary's Church, Leamington

Spa, CV31 1JW

Praxis Midlands

Speaker: Helen Bent, Head of Ministerial Training for Praxis and RSCM

*Inspiring Music in Worship*

encourages parishes to make the best use of music to enhance their worship, even when they have few resources. Guided conversations foster greater understanding – not only of worship and music but also between leaders of worship (both lay and ordained), musicians and congregations. In an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, you are invited to explore together. Grounded in real-life case studies, the day will provide an opportunity to discover new riches whilst acknowledging the tensions of traditional and contemporary forms of worship. Cost £30 per person including lunch; £20 for groups of two or more and Praxis members, £10 for ordinands, Readers in training and students.

Contact [jayne.crooks@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jayne.crooks@blueyonder.co.uk)

## All Good Gifts: Integrating Worship, Faith and the Environment

Thursday 13 June 2019

10.30 am - 3.30 pm

St. Luke's, Chelsea

Praxis South

Speakers: Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston and Matthew Rushton, Precentor of Rochester Cathedral

A day exploring how worship can express and reflect both our calling to be good stewards of God's creation, and worldwide concern about environmental damage and abuse.

Contact [peter@furber.me.uk](mailto:peter@furber.me.uk)

## The Complexity of Inclusion: Ensuring that all are included

Wednesday 30 October 2019

10.30 am - 3.30 pm

St George the Martyr,

Southwark

Praxis South

How do we provide a welcoming environment and appropriate liturgy so that physical, social and emotional inclusion is a consistent feature of our worship? We will address these concerns through key speakers and workshops.

Contact [peter@furber.me.uk](mailto:peter@furber.me.uk)

## RSCM Strengthen for Service Courses 2019: practical guidance on managing, maintaining and developing music in the local church

The Royal School of Church Music is passionate about the power of music to enhance worship. We want to ensure that music across the full breadth of traditions and styles is not only sustained but enriched and expanded within our churches and communities.

- Tuesday 21 - Thursday 23  
May at Wydale Hall, near Scarborough
- Tuesday 1 - Thursday 3  
October at Foxhill House, near Chester

Day places are available for those who live locally at a reduced cost. This still includes lunch and an evening meal.

All bookings through the RSCM website: [www.rscm.org.uk](http://www.rscm.org.uk) Further information from Sarah King, RSCM Education Administrator, 01722 424848; [sking@rscm.com](mailto:sking@rscm.com)

*'Like a mini-retreat but with input.'*

*'Truly enriching.'*

*'Helen's evident passion and expertise was inspiring and greatly appreciated.'*

*'This is the best course on worship I have experienced so far.'*

# Colin's column

I had a fruitless exchange with the editor of *Church Times* in November, and it has provided my theme for this Column. There had been some correspondence about whether there were circumstances in which those who heard confessions could properly breach confidentiality in order to inform the police of something confessed to them about, say, child abuse. This led to full-page treatment by the Bishop of Burnley and the Principal of St Stephen's House about 'the confessional'. Bishop Philip North expressed concern that so few of the curates in Blackburn diocese had received any instruction about the confessional at all during their training for ordination. There was a sense of 'What are we coming to?' Clearly their theological training had been inadequate.

I reckon this question can be handled as a liturgical one, for much of the supposed warrant for the confessional is traced back to the *BCP*, and also because 36 years ago we were engaged in locked-horns battle about the practice in General Synod under the heading of liturgical revision. (In passing I note that *Common Worship* has some provision for 'A Ministry of Reconciliation', and I have commented in an earlier Column on the fudging of the title – but the two contributors to the *Church Times* were in no doubt they were promoting 'the confessional').

The simple legal and doctrinal position is that the Church of England has no such official institution. I can but give the briefest evidence. 'Penance' was one of the five 'commonly called sacraments' disavowed by Article XXV; the warning exhortation at communion should be compared with the 1549 text from which it has been altered so as not to promote auricular confession; the absolution in the Visitation of the Sick is for when something is weighing on the sick person's conscience, and 1549 provision for it to be used in 'auricular confession' (a different occasion!) was removed in 1552 – and for the dying the occasion is a public one where the family may well be present; and the famous excerpt from the 1604 Canons, while it requires extreme confidentiality, gives no hint of 'the confessional'. In the synodical argument in 1983, part of the issue was how a provision for the spiritual health of the physically healthy could be authorised as an 'alternative' to a provision in the *Prayer Book* for reassuring the dying of their forgiveness. Finally, after the proposal was defeated in Synod, the lawyer gave up their policy-laden interpretation of the law, and agreed that a particular confidential one-to-one ministry could be 'commended' (which means other ways of ministering it could be fully lawful), instead of having to be 'authorised' which would have meant no other texts or forms of words could be used. And, I submit, if we have no defined official 'confessional', *a fortiori* there can be no 'seal of the confessional' with any standing in the Church of England, and we ought to banish the language.

None of the above is intended to trouble people who have been accustomed to 'making their confession' and have valued the ministry they have received. And none of the above, of course, affects our common duty of observing strict confidentiality in counselling which calls for it, and in all personal ministry this should be explained and understood by all concerned.

✉ Colin Bichanan is a former Bishop of Woolwich.