

FAVORITE HYMNS SUNDAY

Except where otherwise indicated, these brief hymn histories are written and compiled by Donald W. Duncan, Director of Liturgy & Music.

Holy, holy, holy

The Rev. Kellie Wilson, Sr. Associate Rector's favorite hymn

One of the most beloved hymns in the English language, the words to *Holy, Holy, Holy*, were composed by The Rt. Rev. Reginald Heber (1783-1826), an Anglican cleric of English birth, appointed as Bishop of Calcutta in 1823. Bishop Heber died an untimely death at the age of 43. Following his death, his widow published a collection of many of his hymns. Other beloved hymn texts still in use in our hymnal include *Bread of the world in mercy broken* and *Brightest and best of the stars of the morning*.

Joyful, joyful, we adore thee

Bill Hardaway, Senior Warden's favorite hymn

The Rev. Henry van Dyke (1852-1933), a Presbyterian cleric, author, educator, and diplomat, composed this hymn text while visiting Williams College in 1907. He presented the poem to James Garfield, college president with these words: "Here is a hymn for you. Your mountains [the Berkshires] were my inspiration. It must be sung to the tune of Beethoven's 'Hymn to joy.'" It is interesting to note that the *Hymnal 1940* set this hymn text to a tune other than the Beethoven tune with which we are all familiar today. The editors of the *Hymnal 1982* made this change in response to countless requests from members of the Church during the hymnal revision process.

We gather together

Cindy Poe, Vestry Member's favorite hymn

Although the authorship of the original Dutch text of this hymn is somewhat unknown, Adrianus Valerious (c. 1575-1625) is now widely credited as the creator. The text is a song of thanksgiving to God celebrating the end of Spanish domination and oppression in The Netherlands. New York-born musicologist, Theodore Baker (1851-1934), translated the text from German to English while studying in Leipzig. He gave it the title "Prayer for Thanksgiving" and published it in 1894. While it is most commonly associated with Thanksgiving in this country, the text makes no specific reference to the holiday and the hymn is placed in the "Praise to God" section of our hymnal.

I bind unto myself today

The Rev. Lindy Bunch, Associate Priest's favorite hymn

One of the oldest texts in our hymnal, *I bind unto myself today* is attributed to St. Patrick and is an example of a breastplate prayer or "lorica"- a hymn to be chanted while dressing oneself or arming for battle. Another lorica found in our hymnal is the ever-popular *Be thou my vision*. This hymn, often referred to as "St. Patrick's Breastplate" is most often used on Trinity Sunday, at ordinations, or confirmations. It is often a controversial hymn, not because of any theological quandaries, but because the hymn's musical complexity and length usually divide folks into two camps – devotees and non-fans.

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I come with joy to meet my Lord

Norma Givens, Vestry Member's favorite hymn

I come with joy to meet my Lord was written in 1968 by the contemporary English hymn writer, theologian, and activist for world development, The Rev. Brian Wren, for his congregation at Hockley, Essex, “to sum up a series of sermons on the meaning of communion.” The text begins with the individual worshiper, who comes “with joy to meet my Lord”; moves into the corporate dimension, “the new community of love”; and ends in the spirit of the dismissal in the Eucharist, “together met, together bound, we’ll go our separate ways, and...in the world we’ll live and speak his praise.”

(Excerpted from *The Hymnal 1982 Companion*, Raymond F. Glover, General Editor)

Breathe on me, breath of God

Chan Boyd, Altar Guild President's favorite hymn

While *Breathe on me, breath of God* is the only hymn by Edwin Hatch (1835-1889) in our hymnal, this beloved text has been included in Episcopal hymnals since the early 20th century. First published as an ordination hymn in 1878 in his *Between Doubt and Prayer*, Hatch’s hymn appeared in many subsequent hymn and devotional publications and finally made it into our hymnal in 1916. When asked about her favorite hymn, Chan Boyd recalled that this hymn was sung nearly every Sunday of her childhood in her home parish as the congregation knelt at the end of Morning Prayer services.

They cast their nets in Galilee

The Rev. Dr. Harrison McLeod, Rector's favorite hymn

William Alexander Percy (1885-1942), noted for his bestselling memoir *Lanterns on the Levee*, was a Sewanee graduate, lawyer, planter, poet, and the author of the hymn text *They cast their nets in Galilee*. This text, based on the familiar story from the fifth chapter of Luke’s gospel, is an unvarnished and stark accounting of the cost of discipleship, as well as the ultimate “marvelous peace of God.”

Lift high the cross

Gayle Saylor, Verger's favorite hymn

While Gayle Saylor is the one who identified this as her favorite hymn when approached by our Director of Liturgy & Music, it is most assuredly a favorite of dozens (possibly hundreds) of our parishioners. Next to *Amazing Grace* it is the most-sung hymn at funerals at Christ Church. This hymn was not in the repertoire of Episcopal congregations until the publication of the *Hymnal 1982*. Its endurance as a favorite of many Episcopalians shows that sometimes we can love a “new” hymn as much as we love our “old” hymns.

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