

## All Saints Flower Festival Songs of Praise: June 16<sup>th</sup> 2024

### Welcome and opening prayer

Lord God, Creator of our world and source of all beauty, we give thanks for the loveliness of flowers, and for the gifts of joy and hope and comfort which they convey to us. In loving your creation, help us, our Father, to love and serve you better, and to glorify you in all your works. We offer this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fishing, ferns and frolicking around the dance floor were the passions of William Walsham How, the author of our first hymn. How was the Rector of Whittington in Shrewsbury for 28 years and he was one of three editors working with Sir Arthur Sullivan on the 1871 SPCK hymnbook. Disraeli then asked if he would oversee the slums of the East End of London as its area bishop and children thought the world of him: he was sometimes called “the children’s bishop” or “the omnibus bishop” as he enjoyed using public transport. He was then moved to Wakefield as he didn’t really get on with his diocesan bishop. He was very short and had to carry a small dais around with him as sometimes he couldn’t be seen in a pulpit. How used the traditional Te Deum as the basis for his hymn while in Shropshire and Jenny Thompson used the words of For All The Saints for her floral display – a hymn we love singing here at All Saints using Vaughan Williams’ stirring tune!

### For all the saints 232 (verses 1, 2, 6, 7, 8) [display by Jenny Thompson]

A remarkable woman wrote the words to our next hymn, All things bright and beautiful. Cecil Frances Alexander began writing hymns when one of her godchildren complained that he found difficulty in learning the catechism. So to make it more interesting she started composing verses to explain the Creed – you will know of other hymns of hers including Once in royal David’s city and There is a green hill. She wrote many hymns when living in County Tyrone and in 1848 she published her celebrated book Hymns For Little Children. Mrs Alexander, whose husband became the Primate of All Ireland, wrote All things bright and beautiful to illustrate the line of the creed “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” In our flower festival Elaine Perrett used the hymn as the basis of her display.

### All things bright and beautiful 251, tune 2 (omit \* v 5) [display by Elaine Perrett]

### Reading 1: Flower Songs by M. L. Kiser

So many hymns try to express basic Christian teaching in a concise but simple and dignified way and that is true of The Church’s one foundation, illustrated in flowers at our festival by Sheena MacDonald. Samuel John Stone, a young curate in Windsor, wrote the words in 1863 as a contribution to a famous theological controversy of the period in

which a South African bishop was accused of preaching heresy. Stone was outraged that a bishop should question the fundamentals of Christian belief and wrote a hymn for each of the 12 articles of the Creed, defending the traditional view. The ninth article is “I believe in the holy catholic church, the communion of saints” and it is this on which our next hymn is based.

### The Church's one foundation 585 (omit \* v 3) [display by Sheena MacDonald]

The writer of our next hymn was an American who had ancestors in Scotland and Wales. Priscilla Owens, from Baltimore, was a schoolteacher who led a Sunday School class for over 50 years. She wrote Will your anchor hold for a youth service based on the sea – and indeed even today it’s a hymn often sung on Sea Sunday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in July. It was first published in 1882 in a book called “Songs of triumph, adapted for prayer meetings, camp meetings and all other seasons of religious worship.” It was later brought to England and became the song of the Boys Brigade, linked to their anchor badge. In the letter to the Hebrews in the Bible we read, “We have this hope as an anchor for our lives, safe and sure.” So let’s sing this hymn on which Susan Gray based her display

### Will your anchor hold [display by Susan Gray]

### Reading 2: Matthew 6: 25-34

Our next hymn was written in 1923 by a man who started out as a teacher, then became a journalist, then trained for Methodist ministry until hit by ill health, then became an insurance salesman. Thomas Chisholm’s faith never faltered and he wrote 1200 poems; this was one of many hymns he wrote, published by a Methodist minister in Kansas. It reached Britain in 1962 when included in the Baptist Hymn Book. Chisholm’s words, interpreted in a display by Gillian Kingslake in our flower festival, are based on words from the Bible, the third chapter of Lamentations: “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning – great is your faithfulness.”

### Great is thy faithfulness 453 [display by Gillian Kingslake]

Here at All Saints we are part of the Scottish Episcopal Church so it is absolutely right that we should actually sing a Scottish hymn, the words of which inspired the display by Louise Benson. “The Summons” also called Will You Come and Follow Me was written by John L. Bell in 1987 after being accepted into the Iona Community in 1980. The hymn is set to the tune of Kelvingrove, a traditional Scottish melody and its text contains thirteen questions asked by Jesus – the first four verses with the questions are in Jesus’ voice, and the fifth is the singer’s response to them. The hymn is based on a passage in Mark 1 in which Jesus calls his disciples to follow him.

### Will you come and follow me 622 [display by Louise Benson]

### Reading 3: The Book of Nature by St. Therese of Lisieux

Lord of beauty, thine the splendour was written by Cyril Argentine Alington, an English educationalist, scholar, cleric, and author. He was successively the headmaster of Shrewsbury School and Eton College. He also served as chaplain to King George V and as Dean of Durham. It was first published in Eton Faces (1933), the book which Alington published as a farewell to Eton when leaving to become Dean of Durham. The hymn has inspired a display by Gioia Whitmore in our flower festival. Alington wrote more than 50 books, including works on religion, biography, history, poetry, and a series of detective novels. He appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine on 29 June 1931 described as "An accomplished classicist, a witty writer especially of light verse, and a priest of orthodox convictions..."

**Lord of beauty, thine the splendour      258      [display by Gioia Whitmore]**

We're coming near to the end of our Songs of Praise this evening so it's apt that we should sing one of the best known evening hymns. Well, The day thou gavest Lord is ended may be one of the top evening hymns but it wasn't actually written as an evening hymn at all. John Ellerton was a prolific Victorian hymnwriter and in fact collaborated with Bishop How who wrote For all the saints on the SPCK church hymnbook. Ellerton was born in London, then sent to the Isle of Man to be educated at King William's College, continued at Cambridge and was ordained in 1850.

He served his first curacy in Eastbourne, Sussex, then became then took up an incumbency in Crewe Green in Cheshire, later serving in Shropshire, Barnes in south London, Italy and Essex. He wrote The day thou gavest in 1870 as a hymn to be used in a liturgy for missionary meetings and its worldwide mission message also prompted Queen Victoria to choose it for her Diamond Jubilee service in St Paul's Cathedral as she thought it was a perfect hymn to celebrate the British Empire! It is certainly true that this favourite hymn, with words that inspired Mary Stott's display in our festival, reflected on the growing worldwide church of Jesus and its unceasing, unbroken offering of worship to God, giving us a marvellous sense of fellowship with Christians all around the world.

**The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended      22      [display by Mary Stott]**

#### Blessing

May the fragrance of the flowers and of the blossom on the trees fill your hearts with the sweetness of God's love.

May the rays of the shining sun make you aware of the healing given through our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the wind as it blows remind you of the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives:

And may the blessing of the three-in-one God, the God who created and upholds us, keep you and all those whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen.

Thank you for coming along to our Songs of Praise this evening and a very big thank you to all members of our flower team who have decorated All Saints church so spectacularly for us to enjoy over the past few days.

Many of our hymns this evening have been more traditional, but we're going to end with a rousing worship song written in 1987 by Graham Kendrick, with words that inspired Jean Stirling's display in our flower festival. Graham Kendrick is the son of a Baptist minister and was inspired by the music of The Beatles and other groups in the 60s and 70s. He trained as a teacher but felt called to full-time ministry, which has seen him perform in concerts and evangelistic events, serving as musical director for British Youth for Christ, working from St Michael le Belfry church in York, joining the Ichthus Christian fellowship in London, and founding March for Jesus.

Shine Jesus Shine or Lord the light of your love is shining has been chosen in the top 10 of all hymns by Songs of Praise TV viewers and also described as the most loathed happy clappy contemporary worship song! I hope we can persuade you to dismiss the negative views as we close with it this evening – and we're going to do something I've always done in my churches when this is sung: fling open the church doors so everyone else can hear us praising God and sending us out with joy!

**Lord, the light of your love is shining      513      [display by Jean Stirling]**

Father, thank you that you have revealed Your love to us today and the beauty of your creation and the talents of your people throughout our flower festival. We invite You to send us out from here in the power of the Holy Spirit. Fan into flame the gifts that you have given us, Come reveal Your grace and truth to us each day. For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**All: In the name of Christ. Amen**