

ANNA'S SONG (LIFT THIS CHILD)

1981. A long story that can't be made short! Pro Hart, noted Australian painter and Christian, had begun a series of paintings depicting the story of Christmas set in the Australian Outback. His publisher, Rigby's, were at first just going to put the Bible texts with the pictures, but they decided it needed more. Mike Gutzeit, the Rigby's rep and a Lutheran, asked his pastor if he knew anybody who could do a text to go with the paintings. The pastor, Mike Hassold (later Principal of Luther Seminary, Adelaide) just happened to be doing a course under Norman Habel, and so Norman was enlisted. He did a series of poems, mostly in free form, but some, like this one, in verse. Norman asked me to put music to some of them. "Anna's Song" and "Will you be coming home this Christmas?" were two of the first to get a tune. Both tunes came very quickly, and became highlights of the show that a group of us did almost every year from 1981 to 1988 in South Australia and further afield. The book and the show, OUTBACK CHRISTMAS, are a powerful presentation of the Christmas narratives, more impressive, I think, for showing the characters to be real people in difficult situations than for being distinctly Australian, though they are that as well. For "Anna's song" Norman took customs associated with the welcoming of new children from various cultures around the world and applied them to Jesus. The song works well if it's begun and ended simply and quietly, with a gradual build-up in the song to a climax in verse 5.

1. Lift this child to the sun,
raise this child to the sky,
God has come from above,
come to earth from on high.
Lift this child, lift this child to the
sun.

2. Lay this child on the ground,
one with us, one with earth;
let God know in his Son
human clay, human birth.
Lay this child, lay this child on the
ground.

3. Place this child in the shade,
hang this child 'neath a tree;
with his hand on the wood
may this child set us free.
Place this child, place this child in
the shade.

4. Give this child to the world,
let him be common folk;
God has come to be born
as an ordin'ry bloke.
Give this child, give this child to
the world.

5. Send this child down the road,
let him ride hard the track;
to be king of the bush
and the harsh world outback.
Send this child, send this child
down the road.

6. Lift this child to the night,
to the Silence of God;
let this child cry for us
and the silence be heard.
Lift this child, lift this child to the
night.

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Robin Mann

WHEN OUR LIFE BEGAN AGAIN

1980. I rarely write words without having music in mind, and vice versa. But after I have an initial "song" I often start again with words or music. I wrote 4 tunes for this song before I got to the one it has now, and even then I wasn't very happy with it. It was only when Geoff Strelan suggested (a year or two later) changing the key to D minor (rather than E minor) that it sounded right.

1. When his time was over,
the palms lay where they fell.
As they ate together, he told his friends farewell.
Jesus, though you cried out for some other end,
love could only choose a cross
when our life began again.

2. Secretly they planned it,
with money changing hands;
in the quiet garden a kiss betrayed their man.
Priests and elders tried him,
soldiers crowned him king.
We were in the crowd that day
when our life began again.

3. Women wept to see him,
he said "Don't weep for me."
Many laughed and mocked him,
"Forgive them, they don't see."
Jesus, please forgive me, you know what I am;
I was one who nailed your hands
when our life began again.

4. There was one who asked you,
"Remember me this day."
Jesus, when I'm dying, remember me that way.
When my life is over, be with me, my friend,
like the thief upon the cross
when our life began again.

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THEY KNEW WHO HE WAS

1982, February 7th, at the evening student service at St. Stephen's, Pastor Kevin Schmidt preached on Mark 1:29-39 (Gospel reading for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany, Series B). Kevin had chosen the theme "They knew who he was"(Mark 1:34) for the service, and this song was written for it. When I was asked to give names to the tunes of songs for the Australian Lutheran Hymnal Supplement, this one was called KJ, Kevin's initials and the way in which people sometimes referred to him. I enjoyed working with Kevin from 1976 -80 at St. Stephen's. Musically, this started on the 12 string guitar as a folky sounding song, but I prefer to do it in a rock style, with a strong on-beat. FURTHER REFLECTIONS "Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases, and drove out many demons. He would not let the demons say anything because they knew who he was." (Mark 1:34) Some today are fond of speaking about the power of Satan, the destructive actions of demons and devils in people's lives. I suspect that this is often an unhealthy fascination, part of the late 20th century Western fascination with evil and darkness and antiheroes. Without faith in the Divine Liberator this 'worship' of dark forces is bound to increase. Yet, even though the power of the Devil, is fearsome and awful, it is no match for the power of Jesus. The demons know this. They - early witnesses to the identity of Christ in Mark's gospel - understand who is boss: "... but Jesus does not permit the demons to speak. He does not want his witnesses to be from the side of Satan or Beelzebul, but from his new cleansed community, who know that the powers of the unclean and demonic have been defeated. Satan is a liar, and his claim to be able to retain possession of human beings is a lie. As the prince of this world, he is constantly usurping the power which belongs legitimately and solely to God the King..... In Jesus, the kingdom of God smashes the kingdoms of evil." ['Crossing The Boundaries' Rick Strelan. Lutheran Publishing House 1991] Awareness of the power of evil - especially in our own lives - is an important part of being Christian. But knowing the authority of Jesus, and being confident in it's protective cover for us, is even more vital.

1. When Jesus came the demons
cried,
oh, how they cried;
they knew they had no place to
hide,
no place to hide

They knew who he was,
they knew who he was,
yes, they knew who he was
and they cried, how they cried

2. They knew he wasn't just a
man,
not just a man;
they felt the power of God's
great hand,
God's mighty hand.

3. No devil could withstand
God's son,
God's only son;
they trembled when his time
had come,
his time had come.

4. Now Jesus lives and all is well,
yes, all is well;
he rules in heaven, he rules in
hell,
heaven and hell.

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RESURRECTION SHOUT

1978. At the time this song was written I was seeing quite a lot of Rod Boucher. Rod is a Christian, a rock musician, a modern-day St. Francis of Assisi, who was for many years the leading light and inspirational guru of many Adelaide Christian musicians. He set up a recording studio at his house, produced scores of cassettes, wrote numerous songs and several musicals. Although Rod is a very dogmatic character, he gave to me and many others a sense of freedom. His daring and his laughter were infectious, and, among other things, his personality found its way into this song.

1. The Son is up, the Word is out.
The Son is up and the Word is out –
give a resurrection shout!
Morning brought the news, the tomb was open;
death was gone, his magic spell was broken.
The Son is up and the Word is out –
give a resurrection shout – yeah!
Give a resurrection shout!

2. The Son is come, the Word is here.
The Son is come and the word is here –
give a resurrection cheer!
Mary, dry your eyes, now stop your crying:
Jesus Christ has put an end to dying.
The Son is come and the word is here –
give a resurrection cheer – yeah!
Give a resurrection cheer!

3. The Son is bright, the Word is strong.
The Son is bright and the Word is strong –
sing a resurrection song!
Sing a song and join this celebration:
Jesus has begun the new creation.
The Son is bright and the Word is strong –
sing a resurrection song – yeah!
Sing a resurrection song – yeah!
Sing a resurrection song!

Robin Mann 1978. © Kevin Mayhew Publishers

LOVE IS THE LAW

1974. The music comes from an album by British folk-rock group Steeleye Span, and is the music for a traditional song called "Copshawholme Fair". Living by the Spirit of God should look and feel markedly different from living by the law. More on that elsewhere.

1. Spring follows winter, as sun follows rain;
with thunder comes lightning,
it's always the same.
The world keeps on rolling
through day, month and year;
the sun needs no telling that daybreak is here.

2. O how I would like to be just like the sun,
O how I would like to know what must be done.
It's always a struggle between right and wrong.
I need you, Lord Jesus, to guide me along.

3. The promise was made
through your prophet, that we
would live by your spirit, that we would be free:
laws would be written on paper no more –
our hearts are the paper and love is the law.

4. "My Spirit I leave you, although I must go,
my Spirit I leave you, my peace you will know.
Love one another as I have loved you.
This I have told you, this you must do."

5. We thank you, our Father, for freedom to slip,
for freedom to stumble, for freedom to trip;
Christ is our helper, to him I will cling.
Love is the song he has taught us to sing.

© 1974 Robin Mann (words)

UNTIL YOU OPEN MY EYES

1983. Another song written for the student service at St. Stephen's, when the theme was based on Luke 24:31 "Their eyes were opened and they recognised him". This story of the encounter on the road to Emmaus is another shining illustration of the core of the Christian faith: it's God who acts before we even think about it, God who opens blind eyes, God who loves those who are still sinners.

I can't hear your voice until you open up my ears.
I can't recognise your face until you
open my eyes, and I can see you;
break the bread, your body will make me strong.

1. Adam's sin keeps me locked up in these chains,
and I try in vain to find the key.
You break through these prison walls,
you break through these prison walls for me.

2. No-one knows where the Holy Spirit goes,
but we see the trail he leaves behind:
eyes that now are opened up,
eyes that now are opened up were blind.

3. Jesus' friends thought they really knew him then,
but they still depended on a sign.
Maybe I will understand,
Maybe I will understand next time.

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THE WAY IS LOW

1980. When I was asked to give names to the tunes of my songs/hymns for the supplement to the Lutheran Hymnal in Australia, Dorothy and I had a great time choosing names. This one was called "Long Flat", after the place where I grew up. It's a small dairying community just across the Murray River and slightly downstream from Murray Bridge. The reclaimed swamp provides rich pasture for cattle, but the name says a lot about it. It's plain, ordinary, small, and the prevailing smell is cow manure. It ties in very well with my feeling about the Christian life. Though we're heading towards a glorious future and we get glimpses of that here and now, the day by day reality is humble. We meet God in our neighbours, we praise God in our work. God speaks to us through others – our wives, husbands, children and even our pastors (just a joke!). And God comes to us in a sip of wine and a little piece of wafer or bread. Resurrection is coming, but we are called to follow Jesus down the road to Jerusalem.

1. Low, the way is low
with the man the angels praise.
He who spoke the sky
was a baby dressed in hay.

We are companions of
the one whose name is Love,
we share his life as we grow.
We carry Jesus' death
with each and every breath,
our hope is high, the way is low.

2. See the glory road,
he was tempted by it too.
But he set his course
with Jerusalem in view.

3. When our time is gone,
we will see the great new day.
Till that day appears,
all we know is Jesus' way.

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KEEPING MY EYES ON YOU

1982. Martin Luther described the human condition of sin with the Latin phrase 'incurvatus se' - 'curved in on oneself'. When Jesus says "Follow me!" he asks us to turn out from ourselves, to put our focus on him, and so be free of sin. The essential freedom that Jesus gives us is the freedom from our selves, looking out and serving others' interests, not our own.

Keeping my eyes on you,
keeping my eyes on what you do,
keeping my eyes on you.

1. Watching the way you smile,
watching the way you cry,
watching the way you give yourself,
watching the way you die.

2. Sailing out on the lake,
terrified in the storm,
seeing you walk upon the waves,
knowing you bring the dawn.

3. Long ago words come true,
here you are still today;
bringing us hope and life and peace,
meeting us on our way.

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MAY THE FEET OF GOD WALK WITH YOU (A CHRISTMAS BLESSING)

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1983. Aub Podlich, friend from way back and Lutheran pastor in Queensland, sent me A Christmas Blessing/May the feet of God walk with you together with a lot of other poems towards the end of 1982. It was a busy time, and it wasn't until January '83 that I sat down to put a tune to it. The words sang themselves — a two minute melody! Many people have obviously thought that the 8 lines don't say quite enough, and have added their own verses for weddings, funerals, anything! Though there may be occasions when some extra words seem desirable, Aub likes it as it is, and so do I (usually sung twice). Sometimes less equals more. As your servant Patrick prayed long ago, may you be behind and before me, above and below me. May your presence that we celebrate at Christmas stay with us through every day and night of the year.

May the feet of God walk with you,
and his hand hold you tight.
May the eye of God rest on you,
and his ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and his breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you,
and his love bring you home.

© 1983 Words: Aub Podlich; Music: Robin Mann

MAY WE BE ONE

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1981. How often in the New Testament is unity urged on the first Christians? I was working on this song for one of our regular student services, which took its theme — 'May they be one' — from John 17. Dorothy heard me singing it and asked if it was for an approaching wedding we were singing at. Well, it became a song for both occasions, and was first sung for the wedding service at St Stephen's. I don't know how many weddings it's been sung at since, but I think it must be several hundred. Every person you make is unique. Help us understand and appreciate the differences, and work for the unity and mutual support this one world needs for its health and well-being.

1. May we be one,
bound in love forever,
growing close together day by day;
growing as God fills us with his life —
we are joined in him, he makes us one.

2. May we be one,
as our Father planned it —
may the love of Jesus make us strong.
No-one can harm us when he is near —
he has brought us peace, he makes us one.

3. May we be one,
Jesus' truth to bind us —
with his body he unites us all;
dying our death he restores our life,
living with us now he makes us one.

4. May we be one,
sharing life together
with the Father and his only Son.
Now we have life in this world of death;
heaven has begun, he makes us one.
Heaven has begun, he makes us one.

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LOVE ONE ANOTHER

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1980. Almost an extended Scripture chorus, based on sections of John's gospel. I added the extra words in the chorus (bracketed) to try to get the kids at Immanuel College in Adelaide to sing along a little more. (I used to sing there five or six times a year.) It worked, with this song anyway, and this version has proved a winner with kids of all ages. The 'Yeah', 'Alright' and 'OK' have to be sung in a slightly exaggerated stage whisper — and with a slight American accent. I've even developed a rationale for this: Jesus' command is clear and strong, so sing the main chorus in a loud voice; however, we're not very good at loving and caring, not even sure we want to love and care, so sing the response words quietly. When we get tired of loving, wake us up again. When we become self-obsessed, attract our attention and help us to see you in our neighbour. When we are discouraged by the apparent failure of our efforts, inspire us by whatever means you know is best for us.

1. When I go, you will look for me,
when I go, you will wonder.
When I go, you will look for me;
but I won't be gone, you will see me when you . . .

Love one another (Yeah!),
love one another (Alriiight!),
care for each other (OK);
love one another as I have loved you all.

2. If you love, you are friends of mine;
if you love, you're my children.
If you love, you are friends of mine;
everyone will know I am with you when you . . .

3. Love your friends, love your enemies
anytime, anybody.
Love your friends, love your enemies;
in this mystery you are loving me, so . . .

Robin Mann 1980. © Kevin Mayhew Publishers

REACHING OUT

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1980. Written for a Uniting Church Youth Congress, this song has been growing on me in the last couple of years. It sums up for me a lot of what Jesus is about. It was no accident, I believe, that Jesus was crucified rather than being executed in some other way. With his arms extended, he is both vulnerable to the world and also inviting the world into his embrace. John Sabel — friend, mentor, and former student chaplain — used to choose this for services quite a bit. So, when I was asked to give names to the tunes of songs included in the Lutheran Hymnal Supplement, this one was called 'Sabel'. It reflects his style — thanks, John! God of each town and the whole universe, there are no borders to your country. You reach out, and you call, you invite, everybody and everything to be part of your world. You made it all, and you don't want to lose anything.

1. They came, knew his name,
rumours how they flew;
they heard simple words — every line rang true.
Is he real? Has he some new kind of deal?
Jesus, you're the one who shows us
how God feels:

Reaching out, reaching out,
reaching out with open arms.

2. Lame men walked again,
blind men they could see;
lost ones, frowned-upons were your company;
children came, you gave everyone a name —
saved a woman trapped in one of
man's dark games:

3. One man was condemned,
all the world went free;
one man took the blame all for you and me.
When you died, Jesus, when your body cried,
you were calling everyone to be your bride:

4. (So) take up Jesus' cup, drink it to the end;
love, give, start to live, we are Jesus' friends.
May we care with our actions and our prayers.
We've been given so much, people, let's all share!

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