

FATHER BLESS US

Father, bless us as we go.

Jesus, walk beside us.

Holy Spirit, guide us.

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FATHER WELCOMES

(also in 'Let's Sing it Again')

1973. The day before our daughter was born, I had a tune running round my head. Kristin was finally born, by caesarean section, on the evening of Thursday 12 July, and John Sabel, student chaplain and good friend, suggested I write a baptism song for her. The tune in my head became the chorus, and I recall consulting Luther's Large Catechism for the verses and playing the song on the Sabels' piano that Sunday. Dorothy wasn't feeling much like songs at the time, but even she was pleased at the result when I sang it to her in the Ashford Hospital. It's been the most popular and widely used song of any I've written, and I'm not sorry about that. The experience of having a child, of being a parent, led to a joy that completely took me by surprise. Mixed with the other main ingredients — the parable of the prodigal son and the sacrament of baptism — that joy was transformed into this song. It pleases me that it has become a kind of signature tune. Thanks, Kristin and Dorothy! Heavenly Father, you welcome each one of us, no matter who we are, where we've been, or what we've done. Help us to see with your eyes, so we are concerned about others as much as you are about each one of us.

Father welcomes all his children
to his family through his Son.
Father giving his salvation,
life forever has been won.

1. Little children, come to me,
for my kingdom is of these;
life and love I have to give,
mercy for your sin.

2. In the water, in the word,
in his promise be assured:
those who are baptised and believe
shall be born again.

3. Let us daily die to sin,
let us daily rise with him —
walk in the love of Christ our Lord,
live in the peace of God.

Robin Mann 1973; © Kevin Mayhew
Publishers

In German / Auf Deutsch

Text: Nach dem australischen Lied Father
welcomes all his children von Robin Mann
1973, deutsch von Friedemann und Maria
Hebart 1990

Melodie: Kristin, Robin Mann 1973)

Refrain:

Seine Kinder holt der Vater
zur Familie durch den Sohn.
Sein Heil schenkt der Vater ihnen,
ew'ges Leben ist ihr Lohn

1. Kommt, ihr Kinder, kommt zu mir!
Mein Reich steht euch offen hier.
Liebe und Leben schenke ich euch
und Barmherzigkeit. (Refrain)

2. In dem Wasser, in dem Wort,
hat verheißen unser Gott:
wer getauft ist und vertraut,
wird auch neu geboren. (Refrain)

3. Lasst uns täglich Bösem fliehen,
täglich auferstehn mit ihm,
wandeln in der Liebe des Herrn,
Gottes Frieden tun. (Refrain)

HOW SHALL I CALL YOU

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

1977. When the supplement to the Lutheran Hymnal was being prepared in the mid-80s, I was asked to give names to the tunes, to fit with hymn tradition. Dorothy and I enjoyed the opportunity, dedicating some songs to people who'd been influential or who had a hand in helping the song come about. This one got the name of Leigh Creek, a coal mining town, about 550 km north of Adelaide. Not because it was written there, but our band first played it at the opening service of the town's new ecumenical church centre. They sang it well. The names we call God, and the images we have, shape our faith and the style of life that flows out of our beliefs. This has been highlighted in debate about the gender bias of traditional names like 'Master', 'Lord', 'King', and also 'Father'. We need to return again and again to the Scriptures, and experience fresh understandings of God who is much bigger than any one image or name. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we know just a little of who you are. As we grow older, keep alive in us a childlike sense of wonder and a childish sense of fun, a young person's daring and an older person's patience.

1. How shall I call you? Maker of heaven,
poet of sunset and painter of sky,
Father almighty, who's running to find us,
giving his Son who must suffer and die:

Glory to the Father, the Son and the Spirit,
let's sing it again and again.
Glory to the Father, the Son and the Spirit,
forever and ever. Amen.

2. How shall I call you? Lover of children,
shepherd and teacher and brother and friend,
healer of blind man and healer of leper;
you are beginning and middle and end:

3. How shall
I call you? Spirit of comfort,
cloud in the daytime and fire in the night,
guide as we wander, protector in danger,
listener and helper and giver of sight.

4. How shall I call you? Master and servant,
lord of the seasons and lord of the years;
faithful and constant in loving and mercy,
giver of laughter and taker of tears:

WALKING DOWN THE ROAD

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

1978. (first published in All Together Now) There's a natural tendency in human beings to think of God as being majestic and unapproachable. But I find it hard to think of God like that, because Jesus shows us a God who is close, a companion on the way. This is 'not one who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses' (Hebrews 4:15). The God revealed by Jesus, the 'only God we ever get' (Luther), has experienced the life of us humans and promises to stay with us forever. I hope this song communicates that kind of understanding of the inventor of stars and sapphires. Dorothy and I were at a camp at Cudlee Creek in the Adelaide Hills with our 5-year-old daughter and 3-year-old twin sons.. We went for a walk on Saturday afternoon in a paddock where cows had clearly been in recent times. Our children took delight in wandering off, using the cowcakes — dry ones, fortunately! — as stepping stones. This song started from the experience. It should retain an earthy flavour (smell?) — and so should the practice of our faith.

1. When the day has begun,
and the darkness is done,
and my eyes see the sky so blue,
I put on my clothes,
I'm ready to go
walkin down the road with you.

So I'm walkin down the road,
walkin down the road,
walkin down the road with you.
Yes, I'm walkin down the road.
walkin down the road .
walkin down the road with you.

2. You know how it goes
when I'm walkin the road,
I'm a child, everything seems new.
I trip, hurt my knees,
lose my way in the trees,
so I'm walkin down the road with you.

3. You can see where to go,
feel the wind as it blows
in the day and the night-time too.
You know when to run,
when to rest in the sun,
so I'm walkin down the road with you.

4. Oh, stay by my side,
Jesus, you be my guide,
don't you know how I trust in you.
Show me where I should call,
pick me up when I fall,
as I'm walkin down the road with you.

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Publishers

COMFORT COMFORT

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

1975. Three or four days after our twin sons were born, Dorothy was overwhelmed by it all and was crying when I came to visit her in the evening. (Dorothy never cries — well, only about once every ten years. She says it's too much bother.) In typical, helpful, husbandly fashion, I went home and wrote a song for her. She wasn't all that impressed at the time and is still not keen on the song. But I like it, and from many comments made to me, it's clearly been a song that has helped many people when they've been going through difficult times, times of conflict, struggle or depression. In every situation you are with me. When I am crying you sit with me and speak words of comfort or quietly put your arms around me. We pray that your comfort will flow into every moment of our life and spill out into the lives of others.

Comfort, comfort all my people
with the comfort of my word.
Speak it tender to my people:
All your sins are taken away.

1. Though your tears be rivers running,
though your tears be an ocean full,
though you cry with the hurt of living,
comfort, comfort.
Every valley shall be lifted,
every mountain shall be low,
every rough place will be smoother:
comfort, comfort.

2. Though your eyes see only darkness,
though your eyes can see no light,
though your eyes see pain and sorrow:
comfort, comfort.
Every night will have its morning,
every pain will have an end,
every burden will be lightened:
comfort, comfort.

Extra verses written for 1988 Christmas Bowl Appeal

1. Though we build strong walls for
prisons,
though we feast while others starve,
though we fill this world with weapons:
comfort, comfort.
Every prisoner will be rescued,
every hungry mouth be filled,
every gun will rust, forgotten:
comfort, comfort.

2. Though we fracture God's creation,
though we stand so far apart,
though we fail to love each other:
comfort, comfort.
Every wall will crack and crumble,
every stranger will be friend,
every one embrace another:
comfort, comfort.

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PENTECOST PRAYER

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

1976. Some songs are written quickly — this wasn't one of them. I understand the Holy Spirit's work as being mainly recreative: producing faith in people, and the fruits of faith which can largely be summed up under the heading of LOVE. Exotic and unusual things like speaking in tongues and miraculous healings are a fair way down the list. God of creation, God of Easter, God of Pentecost — you're always doing something new. Do something new in each one of us. Make us receptive to your creative touch.

1. When this earth was created
it was God who spoke the word
and it was done;
gave his warmth to the cold earth —
all was new and all was young,
time had begun.

Make me warm when I am cold,
make me young when I am old;
move me, touch me inside,
let your love burn in me now.

2. If I'm rough, make me gentle;
if my words are hard and sharp,
soften this heart.
If I'm weak, make me stronger,
let me look to you for strength
to make a new start.

3. If I'm deaf, break the silence;
if I'm blinded by the dark,
give me your light.
If I'm lame and I stumble,
let me take your hand again
and hold it so tight.

4. If you speak, let me hear you;
help me recognise your voice
everywhere.
If you pass, let me see you;
help me know the face is yours,
help me to care.

ONE BY ONE YOU CALL US HOME

1977. I wrote these words to a tune I heard on an album by 2 English singers, Maddy Prior and June Tabor, called Silly Sisters. The original song, by English folk singer-writer Cyril Tawney, is "The Grey Funnel Line" ("it's one more day on the Grey Funnel Line"). The words were inspired by the line from John 10, the Good Shepherd chapter, "and one by one he calls his own". The song was written for the baptisms of Simon Loffler and Sarah Pryzibilla. Even more than Father Welcomes this song is as apt for funerals as for baptisms. I think I'd like it at my funeral - just don't sing it too fast!

1. Like autumn leaves upon the ground
we know not where we should be bound.
The rain comes hard and night rolls in,
the sky is black and it's cold within.
And one by one you call us home.

2. Bright is the sun and pale the moon;
with winking stars they sing your tune.
The sunset comes, you paint the sky.
The darkness falls like a lullaby.
And one by one you call us home.

3. You do not sit and take your ease;
you wash our feet upon your knees,
shoulder the load that holds us down,
untie the ropes that have kept us bound.
And one by one you call us home.

4. Come walk with me, both old and young.
No other way can take you home.
Here's bread and wine to keep you strong
until we meet for the final song.
And one by one you call us home.

© Music: Cyril Tawney; Words 1977: Robin Mann

GOODBYE, MY FRIENDS

1. Goodbye, my friends, goodbye, my friends;
I may not see you again.
But I hope to meet you all in heaven;
I'm going there.

2. Our life is short, our life is short;
the love of God is so long.
And I hope to meet you all in heaven;
I'm going there.

3. Our death is gone, our death is gone;
there's only life still to come.
And I hope to meet you all in heaven;
I'm going there.
(repeat verse 1)

© 1976 Robin Mann

OF YOUR GOODNESS

1976. Based on an ancient prayer.

Of your goodness, give us.
With your love, inspire us.
By your Spirit, guide us.
By your power, protect us.
In your mercy, God of mercy,
O receive us.
In your mercy, let your blessed
peace be with us.

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GOOD MORNING – PEACE

1. Good morning, good morning; peace be with you.
Good morning, good morning; peace be with you.
(repeat as often as you like)

Other verses — or make up your own
Good evening, good evening; peace be with you.

How are you, how are you? Peace be with you.

It's so good to see you — peace be with you.

It's Christmas, it's Christmas — peace be with you.

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FACE TO FACE

1978. Holy Communion was always a very somber occasion in the Lutheran Church, a private affair. We used to be amused at the way people at our Murray Bridge congregation, not wanting to catch anyone's eye as they came back from kneeling at the altar to receive the bread and wine, would always look up towards the balcony. I don't disagree with it being serious, but it's good that in recent years it's lightened up considerably. This song relates to that shift. The melody and musical feel owes a lot to Australian country-folk singer, Mike McClelland. I always hear it as a light country waltz, the last dance for the night, and I hope the words convey to people that it's a good feeling to be at the altar with other Christians and with God.

1. The candles are lit and the table is laid;
Everything's set to begin:
Parents and children and husbands and wives
Brothers and sisters and friends.

2. The words that are spoken are simple but true,
"This is my body and blood;"
Here is forgiveness for all of your sins
Here is the promise of God.

Here we meet you once again,
God of mercy, God of grace;
Taste your love in bread and wine,
We meet you face to face

3. The candles are lit and the table is laid:
God's invitation says "Come!"
Come, all is ready, our host is at hand,
Father, and Spirit, and Son.

4. No need to be anxious or troubled with fear,
Jesus turns no-one away;
If you need healing or comfort or strength,
Come to this table today. [Chorus]

5. We're free from our sin
and we're free from our death,
Free from our chains of the past;
Free to be lovers and givers and friends,
Free to be people at last! [Chorus]

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LET YOUR WORD FILL MY DAYS

1976. In my first year working for St. Stephen's, I advertised an inaugural night for a youth choir. No-one turned up! While I was waiting for someone to come along, I sat down at the piano and this song began to emerge. The music of the chorus is a steal from Chopin. But as Woody Guthrie, the great American folksong writer and singer, once said, when told that another singer had borrowed from one of his songs: "He just steals from me, but I steal from everybody!"

1. Writer tells his story; artist tells his view;
Lady tells your fortune; I will tell of you.

Let your word fill my days,
Let your music fill my years,
Let your song fill my life
Now and evermore.

2. Jesus healed a deaf man – was it you or I?
Can we hear him speaking in a baby's cry?

3. God has spoken to us from his hanging tree.
All our sin is taken – children, you are free.

4. Listen to him speaking – child upon the street,
Words upon his pages, bread and wine we eat

© 1976 Robin Mann

DADDY, I LOVE YOU

1977. Several people have told me how much they dislike this song – they think it's puerile. Maybe they're right, but I still enjoy singing it, and regard it as childlike, rather than childish. The idea comes from the Hebrew word 'Abba' which both Jesus and Paul used in speaking of God. It's apparently the word that small children use for their male parent, and more equivalent to our 'Dad' or 'Daddy' than 'Father'. Taste in music aside, there is a fear of using such a familiar word for the God who is in charge of the universe. We don't think we should be that close. My reading of the New Testament suggests God wants to be called by something less formal than 'Father', and I don't believe it makes God less awesome by doing so – more, if anything! We cling to the High God of human religion, because we're afraid of the intimate, low god of Jesus. Anyway, the need for inclusive expressions of God may well dispense with all of the above argument.

1. Daddy, I love you, you know that I do.
There's nothing and no-one I love more than you;
The fairest of fair, and the truest of true.
Daddy, I love you, I do;
oh, Daddy, I love you, I do.

2. I love you in the morning, I love you at night,
In summer and winter, in darkness and light.
On mountains, in valleys, you are my delight
Daddy

3. When I think about you, I can't help but smile;
You move with such grace,
oh you walk with such style;
And I want to follow you mile after mile.
Daddy

Daddy, I love all your changes,
I love that you're always the same.
You keep me from so many dangers;
You're the rainbow after the rain.

4. If I were a painter. I'd paint you in blue,
In golden and crimson and tangerine too;
Black for your mystery, white for your truth.
Daddy

5. My words are too little, my song is too small
To tell of your beauty I've no skill at all
But I'll sing about you until the sky falls.
Daddy

LORD OF THE MORNING

1976. When this was first published, I put it down to the key of E – too low for it, really. It should at least be in F.

1. Lord of the morning, Lord of the day,
Lord of the morning, be with me, I pray.
Here is the new day, ready to live.
Here is the new-morning-life that you give.
I shall be still, just for a while,
watching to see how you smile,
watching to see how you smile.

2. I see your fingers, I see your hands;
mixing the colours, unfolding your plans.
Open my senses, open my mind,
open my heart to your loving design.
Painter of songs, paint me a rhyme,
help me to sing it in time,
help me to sing it in time.

3. Show me the morning, early and still,
empty the cave, empty cross on the hill.
show me the freedom that you have won,
show me the new life in me that's begun.
Lord of the morn, walk at my side:
now I am ready, let's ride,
now I am ready, let's ride.
(Repeat last two lines)

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MY WORD

My word is like the snow and rain
that come down from the sky,
come down from the sky
upon the earth.

They make the crops to grow
and make the seed for us to sow,
seed for us to sow
and food to eat.

So will the word be that I speak:
it will do what I send it to do.
So will the word be that I speak:
it will do what I send it to do.

Words: Isaiah 55. Music: Robin Mann © 1978

COME, LORD JESUS, COME

1976. Pete Seeger, American folk singer and song writer, had a strong influence on my interest in community song. Recordings of concerts where he leads people in song are, to my ears, extraordinary. This song, with one of the earliest prayers of the Christian church as its chorus, uses a call and response verse, typical of many Seeger songs, and which he adapted from the African-Americans. Ideally, lines 1 and 3 of each verse should be solo or small group, and lines 2 and 4 community.

Come, Lord Jesus, come
Into this weary world.
Oh, how we long for you
To come, Lord, come.

1. Wars have come and wars have gone.
Come, Lord, come!
Still the cry goes up, "How long?"
Come, Lord, come!

2. Hearts are breaking, tears fall down. Come...
Come and free us, we are bound. Come...

3. Darkness grows as night wears on. Come...
Will we live to see the dawn. Come...

4. Nations rise and nations fall. Come...
God is with us through it all. Come...

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IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

1978. "I Married You" by Walter Trobisch gave rise to this song. He describes marriage in terms of the tent image, and relates it to Psalm 27:4-5. This song has been used for a wedding or two, but a lot of church musicians, especially organists have trouble handling the rhythm and syncopation. It's a guitar based, or percussion based song. And although it was published in the Key of D, we've always done it in Eb. D is a bit low for it.

1. Your love surrounds me like a tent around me
on a dark and stormy night.
Though fear is creeping as the darkness deepens,
I will stay beside this light.

I will live with you forever,
I will live inside your shelter.
I will live with you forever
in the house of God.

2. When death was coming I was helpless, running,
but I had no place to hide.
O, Jesus heard me cryin, Jesus saw me dyin,
he came to my side.

3. You left your father, O my baby brother,
for the manger and the cross.
Your death is life for me, you killed my enemy,
O death has finally lost.

4. The broken people and the poor and feeble
find a place of shelter here.
There's room for more to come
and join the Father's Son,
his love will take your fear.

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O FATHER, MY FATHER

1974. Judy Collins' singing, unaccompanied, of "Farewell to Tarwathie", which uses this old tune, triggered this song. I had heard the tune years earlier to the words "My horses aint hungry, they won't eat your hay".

1. O Father, my Father, I call on your name.

My heart it is heavy with sorrow and shame.

For I've been a coward, my courage has flown,
and love lies within me as cold as a stone.

2. No word can excuse me, no word that I say;
no place that I run to can hide me away.

For nothing is hidden, yes all is revealed.

You see how I'm sick, Lord, I want to be healed.

3. O Father, my Father, I call on your name.

Your promise is with me to carry my blame.

You came as a servant, your road it was clear.

No coward was Jesus, for love knows no fear.

4. O how I do wish that my last day was here,
that I might be with you where all is made clear;
where sorrow is over, the world is set free,
and that which we hope for we finally see.

© 1973 Words: Robin Mann; Tune: Traditional

In German / Auf Deutsch

1. O Vater, mein Vater, ich rufe dich an;
mein Herz ist belastet mit Kummer und Scham.

Denn ich war ein Feigling,
mein Mut war nur Schein,
und Liebe liegt in mir so kalt wie ein Stein.

2. Kein Wort, das ich sag,
mich entschuldigen kann,
kein Ort mich verstecken, den ich suche dann.
Denn jeder Gedanke liegt offen vor dir,
du siehst, wie ich krank bin, Herr, dein Heil gib mir!

3. O Vater, mein Vater, ich rufe dich an,
ich hab' dein Versprechen,
die Schuld willst du trag'n.
Du kamst als ein Diener, dein Weg war dir klar;
bei Jesus die Liebe ganz unbeirrt war.

4. O wie ich mir wünsche, dass endlich die Stund'
möcht' kommen, an der
auch die Welt wird gesund;
wir werden bei dir sein und Dunkles verstehn,
und was wir jetzt hoffen, das werden wir sehn.

(Transl: Friedemann & Maria Hebart © 1990)

ST PATRICK'S PRAYER

1976. This very ancient prayer, part of the longer Breastplate of St. Patrick, is one of those very simple prayers that is able to yield so much depth. I never tire of singing it.

1. Christ be with me, Christ within me;
Christ before me, Christ beside me.

Christ be with me, Christ be with me

2. Christ to comfort and restore me;
Christ beneath me, Christ above me.

3. Christ in quiet, Christ in danger;
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.

4. Christ be with me, Christ to win me.
Christ in hearts of all that love me.

Words: traditional; Music © 1976 Robin Mann

JESUS, PLEASE WATCH OVER US

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

1979. One of my favourites. (I think it was after she had led the singing of this song at the end of a service at the University of Adelaide that John Sabel said of Dorothy, 'You look like an angel, you sound like an angel — but I know you!') Basic trust in God's protective care is at the heart of the faith. It's a trust that, despite all the wrong in the world, God is good and cares for all of creation, including us. This song took quite a lot of work before it came right. The 'solution' came through doodling on the guitar after I had open-tuned it — in D. This gives a special feel and sound, and opens up different harmonies than you get with conventional guitar tunings. No matter what happens, Jesus, you watch over us, you take care of us. Teach us to treat each hardship, every trouble, as an opportunity to trust you more.

1. As we step from the edge of morning,
feet can't tell where to take us.
Here's a light that will shine forever,
here's the light that will guide us.

Jesus, please watch over us;
Jesus, please take care of us.

2. Trouble comes and we search for safety,
we forget that you hold us.
Fill our minds so that we remember,
say once more that you love us.

3. Danger meets us at every moment,
death is never in hiding.
You are stronger than any danger,
you are stronger than dying.

4. In your life is the Father's welcome,
in your death there is freedom.
Be our life and our death forever,
be our new resurrection.

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