

RECONNECT US

1 Fragments of creation
pieces, no connection
out of touch and out of place
so much time and so much space

*Reconnect us, resurrect us,
make us human please
Reconnect us, resurrect us,
stretch your arms between us*

2 Hiding in the garden
silent to the question
so much fear and so much doubt
take our arms and stretch us out

CHORUS*between us - please!*

Robin Mann © 1984. At the Lutheran World Federation's Assembly in Budapest, I assisted with the presentation on Disability. The group decided to present their report primarily as drama. I wrote this song to conclude the presentation.

A MAN WHO MET A KING

1. He was sent to meet a king in a land across the sea.
He was an ambassador, that's what they said he'd be.
So he left his wife and children and his home before the spring.
He met a man who wore a crown,
but he didn't meet a king.
2. He crossed two mighty oceans and a desert in between.
He stayed with monks and soldiers, and lonely were his dreams.
He dreamed about his marshland home, and swans upon the wing.
He met a man upon a throne,
but he didn't meet a king.
3. When he arrived he was ignored, his messages unread.
His mission was a failure, all the way he'd been misled.
And though he went to see the man who wore St. Peter's ring,
he saw a man of power and wealth
but he didn't meet a king.
4. And all along the way he saw the thin and ugly man.
He saw him hang on every wall, but he didn't understand
until he reached his home again, and his failure was complete.
Before his death, he met the king
with nails in his hands and feet.
5. "Ah, wretched king, you're like a mangy dog that has no home.
You never leave a beaten man, your pain is like my own.
You stayed so close beside me when I lost everything."

(Last two lines instrumental)

1984 Shusaku Endo, acclaimed Japanese novelist and also a Christian, wrote a novel called The Samurai, set in the late 16th - early 17th century when the fierce persecution of Christians sprang up in Japan. His early working title for the book was A Man Who Met A King. This song is based on the book.

BLACK MIST

1. Mamu, mamu, get away from here,
listen what we say.
Devil spirit, get away from here,
go some other way.
Cold wind, blowing in the early morn,
blow this thing away.

*Black mist rolling, black mist rolling,
black mist rolling across the land.*
2. It's still coming, creeping over the earth:
"All you kids, get under cover!
Here's a hole for you, now close your eyes."
But we felt it as it passed over -
cold and silent with an evil breath,
deadly blackened breeze.
3. Next day we were sicker than dogs.
Nobody felt like moving.
Our eyes were red and sore as hell,
and nothing any good for soothing.
No-one fit enough to hunt for food,
so hunger came in too.
4. Then the old people started to die -
I don't remember how many!
We were young, we weren't allowed to see,
but I reckon there was nearly twenty.
That cloud was terrible, it smelt so bad,
my eyes never did get well.
5. They say, wherever that black cloud went,
the trees and the plants were dying.
And though some people did survive,
there was a lot like me got blinded.
They say it wouldn't ever happen again.
Well, I say just take a look around.

1980. I read a report in the Adelaide "Advertiser" of the story of Yami Lester, who grew up in Maralinga, the area used by the British in the 1950's to test nuclear bombs. His and other's persistence finally resulted in a Royal Commission into the matter, but there's a good deal still unresolved. Yami became blind, a fact he attributes to his childhood experience. He now lives in Alice Springs, and works as the Chairman of the Central Lands Council (I think!).

The story stands on its own, but is also a powerful picture of the pervasive nature of evil.

FOR DOROTHY

We share the days and nights together,
the mornings and the afternoons,
the kitchen and the news and weather,
the birthdays and a hundred tunes.

*Oh, but it's not easy to express the way I feel.
No, it isn't easy just to show my love is real.*

I like your style of conversation,
the way you walk and what you wear.
I like your special sense of humour
and jokes that only we can share.

*Oh, how I love your eyes,
they speak more than words
of the song that is you inside.*

So much of you is in my breathing.
You're written into every scene.
I love you more than songs and singing.
I want to stay inside your dreams.

Robin Mann © 1978. We'd been together for 12 years when I wrote this — 30 years later, I'm still trying to find ways to 'show my love is real'.

STEP INTO THE BOAT

1. Step into the boat and sail, hold each other's hand;
you can go anywhere together:
sailing on his ocean, underneath his sky,
guided by his shining stars through the night,
through the night - he will be your light!
2. Step into the wind and fly, hold each other's hand;
you can go anywhere together:
gliding on his breezes, riding on the wind
- all the songs he teaches you, you can sing,
you can sing - he will be your wings!
3. Step into the road and run, hold each other's hand;
you can go anywhere together:
running down his valleys, resting in his shade,
guided by his shining sun everyday,
everyday - he will be your way!

[Repeat Verse 1]

1985. Written for the wedding of two friends, neither of whom was conventional, but both of whom were Christian. I wanted to say to them that it's good to be different, to explore new territory, to be individuals. And even though their marriage didn't last, I'd still say the same for any Christian today. The life of faith is essentially a life of risk, and it ought to express risk-taking in tangible ways.

ALL THINGS NEW

1. I saw heaven and earth,
brand new heaven and earth,
and I heard a voice say to me:
2. He will wipe away
every tear away,
every pain away - all things new.
No more sighing, crying, dying
- God himself is here.
3. And he will make his home,
here with us his home;
God will make his home with us all.
No more sighing, crying, dying
- God himself is here.
4. The old has passed away,
sadness passed away,
death has passed away - all things new.

Melody: Robert Schumann (1838)

Words: Neal Nuske, Robin Mann, Geoff Schirmer (1984); based on Revelation 21:1-5

*I saw a new heaven and a new earth...
I heard a loud voice shout from the throne:
'God's home is now with his people ... He will wipe all tears from
their eyes, and there will be no more death, suffering, crying or pain'...
Then the one sitting on the throne said: 'I am making everything new'.
Revelation 21:1-5*

1984. These words, based on Revelation 21:1-5, were the combined effort of Neal Nuske and Geoff Schirmer, both Lutheran pastors, and myself. When I heard Neal playing the wonderful tune by Robert Schumann ([Von Fremden und Leuten] Of foreign places and people from Scenes of Childhood) I thought it would make a beautiful song. The following day (we were at a National Youth Assembly) Neal suggested Revelation 21 as a theme and I think we immediately wrote the first verse together. The rest came out fairly quickly, and I sang it, with Neal's exquisite accompaniment, at the Assembly concert later in the week.

EMPTY HANDS

*Empty hands, hungry mouth
and I can't sleep tonight.
Empty hands, hungry mouth
and I can't sleep tonight.*

1. I think about a girl in Buenos Aires:
for dinner all she eats is paper cakes.
I think about a girl in Buenos Aires:
for dinner all she eats is paper cakes -
can your heart break for...
2. I can't forget a boy in Soweto:
ten years old and shot down in the street.
I can't forget a boy in Soweto:
ten years old and shot down in the street -
oh, it makes you weep for...
3. Jesus shared his body,
we could share some of his bread around.
Jesus shared his body:
why don't we share his bread around?
It'd make a lovely sound...
4. Sometimes I like to switch on the television,
maybe sit and watch a football game.
Sometimes I like to switch on the television,
sit and watch a football game,
switch off my brain from...

1984. This song began in an upstairs area of the large indoor sports stadium in Budapest, Hungary. The Lutheran World Federation's Assembly and Youth Gathering were held in that city in July 1984, and I thought I was amazingly lucky (should that be wondrously chosen?) to represent the Lutheran Church of Australia as a youth worker. The delegates and visitors had been fed extremely well at the Assembly (many said overfed), and with all the discussion and consciousness about hunger and poverty, the younger ones in particular decided to have a day/night hunger fast / prayer vigil. Somewhere between 2 and 5 am., feeling tired and hungry, this song began. The first 2 verses are based on stories that were told as part of the Assembly.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA HOME

1. In South Australia I was born,
from the dust I was formed,
like so many long before,
I have found a home.
2. Skin of black and skin of white,
can what's wrong be put right?
Skin of yellow, skin of brown,
can we make a home?
We have lived through fire and flood
in the towns, in the scrub;
years of plenty, years of drought,
still this is our home.

*Can you teach us how to live together,
how to cherish every patch of ground?
Jesus, stay with us forever —
help us hear your unchanging sound.*

3. Can we see the beauty still —
Murray Plains, Adelaide Hills,
southern beaches, northern skies —
do we like our home?
Given to us for our good,
can we share as we should,
giving everyone a place
where they feel at home?

Repeat Bridge & V.1

© Robin Mann 1985. Starting from the melody & words of an old folksong I was able to make a song about the place we live in, and love. And a prayer to do better at living here, looking after both the people and the place.

THE OLD MAN SHUFFLE

- 1 See the old man shuffle in,
see the old man shuffle in,
see the old man shuffle in
to the hospital today.
- 2 Oh his legs don't work so well,
no his legs don't work so well,
Oh his legs don't work so well,
they're in retirement now.

BRIDGE: But his love is strong,
it's as strong as yours and mine,
and maybe some more,
and maybe some more,
I think so.

- 3 O he's come to see her smile,
and he's come to make her smile,
o he's come to see Elsie smile
before she smiles no more.

Robin Mann © 1981.

In the last year of her life, Mum got very sick and had to go to hospital. She'd had twelve children, worked hard all her life, and various parts of her body said they'd had enough. She was treated in the Queen Elisabeth Hospital in Adelaide, and various members of the family transported Dad back and forth from Murray Bridge to see her. Dad's legs had just about had it, and his slow walk combined with the tenderness between Mum & Dad led to this song. They exchanged sweet nothings in German (the first language of these 4th & 5th generation Australians). I never sang the song to either of them. Mum died in October of that year, Dad the following April.

SADAKO FROM HIROSHIMA

1. She saw the Thunderbolt in the sky
like a million suns, it prickled her eyes;
she saw the Thunderbolt in the sky -
two years old, it prickled her eyes.

*But now she sits making paper cranes,
paper cranes, paper cranes.
Now she sits making paper cranes -
Sadako from Hiroshima.*
2. She was a runner, swift and strong,
she was tall and slim and her legs were long;
she was a runner, swift and strong -
ten years old and her legs were long.
3. She went to hospital tired and weak,
it was hard to laugh, it was hard to speak.
she went to hospital tired and weak,
eleven years old, it was hard to speak.
And now she sits ...
4. She lost the race that she wanted to win -
paper cranes couldn't cover her with their wings,
cranes couldn't cover her with their wings -
twelve years old and she wanted to win.
And now she lies with her ...
5. This is our cry, this is our prayer,
"May the crane of peace fly everywhere!"
This is our cry, this is our prayer,
"Crane of peace fly everywhere!"

Robin Mann © 1984. On August 6th, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped, on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. 'Sadako And The Thousand Paper Crane', a book by Eleanor Coerr, tells the story of a 2 year old girl called Sadako, who survived the bomb, apparently unscathed, along with her family. When she was 11 years old, however, she became ill with a form of radiation illness. She had to go to hospital. Her best friend came to visit her with a gift. She brought Sadako a folded paper crane, and reminded her of an old Japanese belief: if a sick person made a thousand paper cranes and made a wish on each one, she would get better. Sadako made 642 before she died, but her friends and classmates made the rest and she was buried with a thousand paper cranes. Her statue is in Hiroshima Peace Park — she stands holding an origami crane — and it is her story that has made the folded paper crane a symbol of peace the world over. The song was inspired particularly by a short prayer that Sadako's mother whispers one night as she leaves the hospital bed where her daughter is sleeping: "O flock of heavenly cranes, cover my child with your wings".

MAY THE FEET OF GOD WALK WITH YOU

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.

May the waking sun delight you
and its evening call to prayer.
May the moon and stars surprise you
spin your heart to worlds unseen
May the storms with all their wildness
bring you courage, call to strength.
May the darkness be your comfort,
soft preparing for today.

May the trees and flowers greet you,
sing of life that's all around.
May the weeds bring you compassion,
loved by God and in his hand.
May the bird songs tell of freedom,
save you from our foolish chains.
May your heart spill out with loving,
bless the whole wide universe.

*Words: Aubrey Podlich; Music: Robin Mann © 1983
Verse 2 & 3 added by John Sabel (© 1985),
recorded on 'Reconnect Us'*

Aub Podlich, Lutheran pastor (now in Boonah, Queensland) wrote the words for a Christmas service (probably in 1981). He's done a lot of great writing, including several books of poems & meditations.

I'd asked him to send me anything that I might look at for making into songs. Late in '82 a package arrived. I didn't look at it much before January, though I'd looked at 'A Christmas Blessing', even got some students to have a go at writing a tune for it at a conference. When I got it out again, it really sang itself to me. One of the 'quick' tunes I've done.

EVENING STAR AT COOPER'S CROSSING

1. Over all the cooling sand,
the darkening blanket falls,
and just beyond the Coolibahs
I see the evening star - I see the evening star.
2. Nothing breathes to move a leaf,
and silence like a load.
no insect wing to tremble air,
but still the evening star - but still the evening star.
3. Furnace-hot, each midday taunts
and lies with mirage haze,
but twilight brings its truthfulness,
the lovely evening star - the lovely evening star.
4. Burke and Wills lie sleeping here,
the sands and stones their bed,
where all the world has lost its breath
except the evening star - except the evening star.
5. Jesus, when we lose our way
and silence taunts us through
our parched and burning emptiness -
please be our evening star - please be our evening star.

1983. Another of Aub Podlich's lovely poems. The melody is actually a very simple tune, and could easily be an Australian-Irish melody. The song was transformed for me when Gerard Holmes, keyboard player and songwriter with an angelic voice, did a very different treatment of it in preparation for recording the collection of songs that became RECONNECT US. With Doug Petherick doing his usual great bass work, & some inspired lead guitar from Rick Nankivell, the song became a strong finish for the collection.