

Introduction and Thanks *(from the book)*

'The Word became a human being' says the fourteenth verse of the first chapter of John's gospel. The second person of the eternal Trinity became a member of a carpenter's family in Nazareth. All that Christians know about God is learnt from him - the source of knowledge, the reference point, the everpresent companion.

But the Word isn't frozen in history. It continues to speak to us through the pages of the Bible, and through the spoken and written words of Christians. It communicates through the events and people in our lives as well. Not voices from the sky for most, but conversation built out of the ordinary everyday. We wouldn't suspect such a channel, but the Bible shows that's God's preferred option.

So I could have included every song I ever wrote in this collection. Instead it's limited to some songs that have a specific link with the Bible. A few are simply Bible verses set to music. Some are stories made into songs. Others have a Bible verse or event as a jumping off point, and contain thoughts and feelings inspired by a section of the Word.

Many of these are community songs. They're really modern hymns. Others are meant to be sung by an individual or small group to an audience, or for a congregation.

Thanks to all who have encouraged me on the way - and I haven't lacked encouragement! Thanks especially to so many people at St Stephen's Lutheran Church, Adelaide, for help, advice, prayers, love - my home for more than twenty years. Also to all those associated with the monthly student service there since 1971. So many songs were first sung there, and would not have begun without it.

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Special thanks to four people:

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- * John Sabel, who welcomed our music into the Church and suggested I write a baptism song for my daughter
- * Rod Jepson, who in 1971 invited Dorothy and me to be part of the Scots Church worship band which soon became *Kindekrist*
- * Dorothy Mann (Stiller), who makes music with me, listens to first, second and last drafts, is chief song critic, and God's daily messenger for me.

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THE WORD BECAME A SONG Contents of CD

(Title, Year, & Main Scripture)

1. Included (1990) *Matthew 15:21,28*
2. They knew who he was (1982) *Mark 1:34*
3. Midnight dedication (1976) *Psalm 63:3*
4. Complaint in C (1980) *Psalm 77*
5. May we be one (1981) *John 17:21*
6. She washed his feet
 with her tears (1992) *Luke 7:36-50*
7. In the house of God (1976) *Psalm 27:4,5*
8. Long the hunters have prepared (1987) *Luke 22:2*
9. Teach me your way (1993) *Psalm 86:11*
10. Jesus, Lamb of God (1990) *John 1:29*
11. Be my strength (1992) *Psalm 71*
12. The way is low (1980) *Luke 9:51*
13. The grass withers (1992) *Psalm 40:8*

INCLUDED

1. Included,
you and me and everybody
comprehensively embraced by
the love of the unrestrictive God of all.

With Jesus
we are wanted, we're accepted.
We are never segregated or hated;
we're all incorporated in him.

But they say they don't want her
to be here, she's trouble,
she gets on their nerves.
She speaks a different language,
she's noisy, an ethnic.
What's more, she's got a daughter
who's possessed by a devil!

2. But we're included
in the new improved creation.
We are Jesus' renovations; he's fixed us,
and we're completely overhauled.

With Jesus
we're no longer out of order.
We're no longer on the border,
we're inside the most amazing land of all.

But we say we won't share it
with strangers;
they make us feel so insecure.
It doesn't matter if they're hungry,
or lonely, or desperate.
Why don't they find a place
of their own where they can go?

Included, you and me.... incorporated in him.

*A Canaanite woman... 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'...
'Send her away... she's making all this noise'...
'Even the dogs eat the leftovers that fall from their masters' table'.
'You are a woman of great faith!'
Matthew 15:21-28*

1990. Written for the St Stephen's student service in September, where the theme, based on the story of the Syro-Phoenecian woman, was 'Send her away'. Jesus is not for a cosy, inside club, but for every and any outsider in society. Often easier to acknowledge than to practise, it's the essence of the good news: God becomes a human in order to gather in all of us outsiders.

For me 1990 marked a new phase in my songwriting, where I much more consciously sought fresh images, usually making use of both a thesaurus (Macquarie's) and a rhyming dictionary. 'Included' was one of the first songs to emerge from this process.

THEY KNEW WHO HE WAS

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.

***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

1982. On 7 February, at the evening student service at St Stephen's, Pastor Kevin Schmidt preached on Mark 1:29-39. Kevin had chosen the theme 'They knew who he was' 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 name by which people sometimes referred to him. I enjoyed working with Kevin from 1976-80 at St Stephen's.

Musically, this started on the twelve-string guitar as a folky sounding song, but I prefer to do it in a rock style, with a strong on-beat.

MIDNIGHT DEDICATION

1. Sometimes when it's late at night,
I don't want to go to bed;
I like to spend the time with you instead.
'Cause when its curtains have been
drawn, the city goes to sleep,
and midnight words are easier to speak.

*You mean more to me than laughter,
more than pleasure, more than wealth;
you mean more to me than friendship,
more than happiness and health.
Though these things are dear to me,
much more than I can tell,
you mean more to me than living itself.*
2. I see you in the smiles we share
when friends come round for tea,
in birthday cards, in lovers on the street.
I hear your voice when times are bad,
and dreams have fallen through.
I need some help, and so I turn to you.
3. You could say I've had a lucky life,
though I would call it blessed.
I often wonder why I've had the best.
I pray that if my day grows dark,
and sorrow comes my way,
I'll still have faith enough for me to say:

Your constant love is better than life itself and so I will praise you.
Psalm 63:3

1976. Late nights have often seen the beginnings - and the finishings - of songs.

COMPLAINT

Father, my dear Father, Daddy, my dear Father, tell me true:
Do you really love me like you say you do?

1. I know you've done some splendid rearranging
so anyone can get to heaven's gate,
but I have got some questions of a personal kind
I'd appreciate if you could answer straight.
You see, this acne on my face is so embarrassing,
my legs are bowed a little at the knees.
My dentures keep on slipping and my hair is falling out -
Daddy, do you really care for me?
2. And what about the way you made me clumsy?
What about the way you made me sweat?
God, I've had to cope with being me so far;
still, you've got some time to change me yet.
My legs are too short, my feet are too long,
my bum is bigger than it ought to be.
My left eye wanders and my right eye squints -
God, it isn't fair, don't you agree?
- 2a. Well, I never got a special revelation,
he didn't send a vision from the clouds.
Maybe it was my imagination,
but I think I got his message clear and loud.
3. (He said) I gave you everything you've got (take it or leave it)
and you're the only one of your kind.
You think it's hard to love yourself - well, tough,
put yourself in my shoes sometime.
Yes, you ought to try and see how hard I find you.
And I put you together, I designed you.
I know you much better than you know yourself,
so if I can love you the way I do, so can you!

***I cry aloud to God... in times of trouble I pray to the Lord...
Will the Lord always reject us?... Has he stopped loving us?...
I will remember your great deeds... the wonders you did in the past.
Psalm 77***

1980. A tradition has developed in the church that you can't be honest - with each other, or with God - and really let everything hang out. Not only is this an insult to God, who is totally honest and open with us, but it's emotionally repressive, and damaging to us humans. The Old Testament, especially the Psalms, includes a lot of whingeing, and I like to be faithful to the Bible.

Songs that are humorous are usually fun to sing (except when nobody laughs), and this song has the added advantage of having the word 'bum' in it - always a hit with kids.

MAY WE BE ONE

1. May we be one,
bound in love for ever,
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.

*I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us,
just as you are in me and I am in you.
May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.*
John 17:21

1981. 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. I don't know how many weddings it's been sung at since, but I think it must be several hundred.

Like the traditional hymns used at many weddings 'O perfect Love' or 'Love divine, all love's excelling', this song is aimed first at the whole community of Christians. The love and unity it speaks of are the Spirit's gifts to the whole church. Like all God's gifts, these are not in some 'spiritual' realm, but are present and active in every aspect of our ordinary, everyday lives.

I've heard how well this works as a community song, in many places. But I like it with Dorothy singing it on her own to the accompaniment of my acoustic guitar in open D tuning, capo on third fret.

SHE WASHED HIS FEET WITH HER TEARS

1. She came in and stood behind him,
carried a jar in her hand;
poured the perfume she bought for Jesus,
let down her hair for this man.
They were undecided about who he was:
should they acclaim or condemn?
Oh, when everyone else was unclear
she washed his feet with her tears.
2. Tears don't fall for some that easy,
feelings are hidden within;
strong emotions are reined and bridled,
passion suppressed like a sin.
Is it fear of being mistreated, misjudged?
Can love survive on a leash?
True love flourishes on the frontier,
she washed his feet with her tears.
3. Simon's eyes were disapproving;
did Jesus know what she was?
Did a prophet need signs to tell him
she was a breaker of laws?
She'd a reputation for being too free,
now she was kissing his feet.
It's outrageous! But that's her career,
she washes feet with her tears.
4. Like a magnet he draws these people,
prodigals all coming home.
Though their names are unrecorded,
he recognises his own.
In this world their status may be
second-best,
they may be common or plain.
But they're all number one people here;
she washed his feet with her tears.
5. Jesus turned to his host for dinner,
'Simon, d'you see what she's done?
She gave me a feast of welcome,
you gave me just a few crumbs.
Though her life may not be
upright or correct,
she knows the meaning of love.
She deserves your applause
not your sneer,
she washed my feet with her tears.'
6. Did she cry in celebration?
Was it a sign of release!?
Or was she anticipating
blood as the price of her peace?
Did she dream of arms
stretching out on a cross,
Jesus embracing the world?
Long before he was stuck with a spear,
she washed his feet with her tears.
7. Things will never be quite normal,
nothing can be quite the same.
Even though his death was ugly,
Jesus has got quite a name.
In a world where carpenters
rise from the dead,
nothing is settled or fixed.
Every moment his love interferes;
he washes feet with his tears.

She brought an alabaster jar full of perfume and stood behind Jesus, by his feet, crying and wetting his feet with her tears. Then she dried his feet with her hair, kissed them and poured the perfume on them. Luke 7:37,38

1992. The title for this song was the theme for the July 1992 student service at St Stephen's, from the gospel for the day, Luke 7:36-50. The unnamed woman's action is both a tremendous expression of love, and an act of hospitality and service to Jesus. The text is also another prodigal son/waiting father story, only here the prodigal is a woman, Jesus is the accepting father, and the older brother is a Pharisee.

IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

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.
Oh, Jesus heard me cryin',
Jesus saw me dyin',
he came to my side.
3. You left your father,
oh, my baby brother,
for the manger and the cross.
Your death is life for me,
you killed my enemy,
oh, 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.

***I have asked the Lord for one thing; one thing only do I want:
to live in the Lord's house all my life.
In times of trouble he will shelter me; he will keep me safe in his Temple
and make me secure on a high rock.
Psalm 27:4,5***

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 (tent = temple = tabernacle). 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 song. And although it was first published in the key of D, we've always done it in Eb. D is a bit low for it.

LONG THE HUNTERS HAVE PREPARED

1. Long the hunters have prepared their steel.
The priests and elders gather for the kill.
Still they must delay,
ready for the prey,
knowing clearly the conclusion.
2. People longed to find a superman
to drive the enemy right off their land.
Jesus wasn't right,
didn't want to fight;
offered love - they didn't want that.
3. Crooked witnesses with lies to tell
could not agree, but still the verdict fell.
No-one made a stand
for this blameless man.
Jesus, you had no defenders.
4. Peter, waiting in the yard below,
three times denied him,
saying, 'I don't know!'
Yes, he was afraid of a serving maid.
Suddenly the cock was crowing.

*And we're no different than they were then;
always try to save our own skin.
Lord, have mercy on us,
like you had mercy on them.*

5. He is sentenced to the sinner's fate;
his crime, compassion. Now he feels their hate.
Seemingly so weak, doesn't even speak,
here's the lamb and here's the slaughter. (*Chorus*)

***The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were afraid of the people,
and so they were trying to find a way of putting Jesus to death secretly.
Luke 22:2***

1987. When I'm unsure of what work I should be doing, and initiative is conspicuously absent from my life, I write a lot of songs. This was true in 1976, my first year as a parish worker, and in 1987, my last full year as a lay worker with tertiary students.

I was thinking of Bob Dylan's style of writing when I was working on this song, and I suspect both the lyrics and music reflect that influence.

TEACH ME YOUR WAY

*Teach me your way,
how to walk beside you faithfully.
Make me single-hearted,
single-hearted,
devoted to you, devoted to you.*

1. Educate my intellect,
fashion my ideals.
Get inside of my emotions,
walk among my dreams.
2. Take me to your cross of pain,
to your cross of glory,
where your power looks like weakness,
good appears as bad.
3. Jesus, you can steer my life,
alter my direction.
Be the compass for my journey,
navigate me home.

<p><i>Yahweh, teach me your way, how to walk beside you faithfully, make me single-hearted in fearing your name. Psalm 86:11 (Jerusalem Bible)</i></p>

1993. I had begun a song based on this psalm a couple of years earlier, guided by the NIV translation 'give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name'. It had never been finished. This time it was, starting the week I began as Worship/Music Co-ordinator at Golden Grove Lutheran Fellowship (in north-east Adelaide).

It was helped by the Good News translation - 'teach me to serve you with complete devotion', which, combined with my love of the Everly Brothers song 'Devoted to you', gave me the last line of the chorus. The chorus was all I had for a while, both words and music. Then I had a tune for the verse. The words gradually took shape over several weeks.

Family influence was more direct with this song than with some others. The jazzy influences are due to drumming son Thom starting his Jazz Performance degree that year. Dorothy suggested line two of verse two, and also proposed changing 'ways' back to 'way' in the title and chorus.

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD

Jesus, lamb of God, have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.

*The next day, seeing Jesus coming towards him,
John said, 'Look, there is the Lamb of God
that takes away the sin of the world.'*

John 1:29

1990. Towards the end of the year I attempted to write a lot of liturgical music. I was hoping to do complete orders containing this music. It's still work in progress and I continue to be unsure whether I want to put out worship orders with music all from one source. I like having the interest that comes from a mixture of musical origins.

Anyway, the 'Lamb of God' has always been one of my favourite parts of the church's worship, and this song came out of those uncompleted efforts.

BE MY STRENGTH

1. Like a well-worn shoe,
you have supported me;
I have trusted you since I was young.
But now my legs won't take me
quite as far or quite as swiftly,
be my strength, be my speed,
be my shelter.
2. Like a cosy room,
you have surrounded me;
like a mother's womb, keeping me safe.
But now my bones are brittle
and my voice won't sing as sweetly,
be my strength, be my speed,
be my shelter.
3. Like no other God,
you keep me from the grave;
death will come just once,
life will go on.
And though I don't feel different
than I did when I was younger,
be my strength, be my speed,
be my shelter.

*Lord, I have come to you for protection...
Be my secure shelter and a strong fortress to protect me...
Do not reject me now that I am old; do not abandon me now that I am feeble.
You have taught me ever since I was young.*

Psalm 71

1992. I had been asked to write a song for the aged care presentation at the annual state convention of our church. I made no headway until my co-worker at St Stephen's, Ronda Schultz (who had asked me in the first place!), suggested I look at Psalm 71 as a basis. Voilà!

THE WAY IS LOW

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.

As the time drew near when Jesus would be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind and set out on his way to Jerusalem. Luke 9:51

At all times we carry in our mortal bodies the death of Jesus, so that his life also may be seen in our bodies. 2 Corinthians 4:10

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 in South Australia. The reclaimed swamp provides rich pasture for cattle, but the name says a lot about the place. It's plain, ordinary, small, and the prevailing smell is of 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 wife, husband, children and even our pastor (just a joke, Pastor!). And God comes to us in a sip of wine and a little piece of bread. Resurrection is coming, but we are called to follow Jesus down the road to our own Jerusalem.

THE GRASS WITHERS

The grass withers and the flowers fade,
the grass withers and the flowers fade,
the grass withers and the flowers fade,
but the word of our God lasts forever and ever,
the word of our God lasts forever.

Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:24-25

1992. Isaiah 40-55 is so full of hope, it's easy to see why quite a few songs have come from there. I've used this as a response or prelude to the readings in worship.