

FATHER WELCOMES

*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.

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.

Use: Lent 4 C, baptisms, funerals, opening worship, welcomes.