

Preface to the New Ancient and Modern: Hymns and Songs for Refreshing Worship

Modern Worship has embraced a gamut of content and style that not only betokens a true catholicity of approach, but also provides distinctive niches in which to dwell. That the Christian Church can accommodate both an inclusive and exclusive approach to sung praise at the same time is truly remarkable. While some churches have a preferred style, perhaps wedded to the kind of musicians they employ, others seek to broaden their worship experience with material from other countries, traditions and periods of history in an open universal way. Such breadth and openness, while laudable, is not easy to cater for in a single book. We hope that this edition will be thoroughly useable on a weekly basis for parishes seeking a new edition that honours the great tradition of English language hymnody, yet we also hope to have offered the best of new material that will widen the scope and depth of worshipping events from large-scale services to small groups meeting for intimate prayer. So it is that in returning to the title *Ancient and Modern*, there is a clear intention to produce the latest in the line, but also to provide a contemporary edition that reflects not only the *Ancient and Modern* heritage, but also the needs of today's worshipping communities, be they large or small.

To this end, there is a greater amount of 'family-friendly' material for mixed-age or young person's worship. Another new trend, begun with *Sing Praise* is the inclusion of shorter, chant-like material. Well-known items from the Taizé Community and from Iona are included, for use in both conventional Eucharistic settings, or in regular or one-off services of the Word. While both of these styles have been enthusiastically adopted by today's churches, their emphasis on peace, justice and reconciliation has also resonated with modern Christian life and prayer.

The first edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* was published in 1861, with 273 hymns, and while the 'Ancient and Modern' name was dropped from the title, *Common Praise* was nevertheless the eighth instantiation of an 'Ancient and Modern' hymnbook. In 2010 came a supplement, *Sing Praise*, which contained 330 hymns and songs, most of which did not appear in *Common Praise*.

Now with this completely new *Ancient and Modern*, we have a ninth edition, which both celebrates the 150th anniversary of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, and brings together the best of *Common Praise* and *Sing Praise*. While the editors of *Common Praise* wrote that they had "tried to select the best hymns, those which will last", the editors of *Sing Praise* said they were "on the lookout for ways to 'sing a new song to the Lord', while also valuing what is tried and tested". So there lies at the core of the *Ancient and Modern* brand, a desire to retain not only the greatest of the hymns still in use from the past seventeen hundred years, but also a desire to encourage and affirm the very best of recent material. Thus there is in this *Ancient and Modern* the widest range of style and heritage of hymns and songs that has yet been produced.

It is also the largest book to date, with 800 items. While other hymnbooks have even more, we are acutely aware of the bulk of the book and the problems that can cause. We have edited with caution, respect and a clear eye to both the past and the future. 86 of the 273 hymns from the original edition of 1861 remain in this book: just under a third. There are 50 items in this book that were not in *Common Praise* nor *Sing Praise*, and they have been drawn from a wide range of contemporary sources and traditions.

Some hymns have been altered slightly, where widely accepted alternatives exist elsewhere and are in use, or where the flow and rhythm of the text make a small alteration unnoticeable. The language we speak and sing has political, theological and personal significance, and we hope to have sailed a course between the rocks of poetical butchery on one side and gender obsession on the other. Similarly texts have only been de-archaisised where there is precedent or no apparent damage to the original.

We have taken great care to ensure that arrangements of contemporary items are musically satisfying for worship leaders, choir members and congregation alike. The main purpose lying behind all such choices concerns their suitability for congregational singing, with accompaniments and arrangements suited to their genre. Many new arrangements have been commissioned accordingly. Similarly, a generous range of descents is included to encourage choirs and enrich the overall musical impact of many of the well-known hymns.

The book follows a seasonal approach which flows with the *Common Worship* lectionary, but also contains significant sections based on liturgical use and 'position', and thematic suggestions too. We have included a Scriptural Index (building on the one in *Sing Praise*), and a thematic index, well as providing a suggested selection of five hymns for a service following the Common Worship Sunday Eucharistic Lectionary, as *Common Praise* did. Thus we hope to have provided every possible tool for those selecting hymns, so that worship can be truly enriched by ordering material in such an accessible, helpful way.

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