

## Twelve New Hymns: Anthems for the Liturgical Year

The hymn texts in this collection are drawn from *Songs for the Cycle* by the Rev. Michael Hudson of St. David's Episcopal Church in Cullowhee, North Carolina. Over three years Michael wrote a hymn lyric each week to complement the Sunday gospel reading appointed by the Episcopal lectionary. With each text he recommends a hymn tune found in the Episcopal *Hymnal 1982*.

Michael conceived his lyrics for personal meditation and for unison singing by congregations and choirs. Occasionally I have asked our church choir to sing one of the hymns as an accompanied unison anthem for a Sunday morning service. I came to realize how much more satisfactory it would be to have the choir sing the hymns in four-part harmony with musical arrangements a degree richer than those we usually find in hymnals. But where were such arrangements to be found, and how could I expect our choir to read both a new text and new vocal parts, looking back and forth from one to the other?

Thus was born the idea of this collection: to arrange hymn tunes in musical settings with somewhat richer moving parts, harmonic modulations, and modal tonalities, and to print Michael's texts amidst the musical staves in hymnal fashion. To my delight, Michael was immediately forthcoming in agreeing to such a collaboration.

The lyrics selected here represent a range of seasons and themes throughout the liturgical year, focusing especially on festival Sundays. The musical settings sometimes use Michael's suggested tune and at other times a different tune to avoid copyright obstacles. The hymns are all SATB yet remain suitable for accompanied unison singing by choir or congregation as well.

*Songs for the Cycle* appeared in 2004. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church at that time, The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, welcomed the volume's publication:

What I particularly appreciated as I read through these texts is that each one is an engaging meditation that combines sound theology with poetic skill. I think they would be an enrichment to any worshiping community and certainly food for personal reflection and prayer.

My wife Marian and I heartily agree. We have long read these texts on Sunday evenings for mealtime reflection, matching our choice to the Gospel reading of the morning's worship service. We find that Michael beautifully catches the spirit of these lyrics in his volume's Introduction:

Every week the aim was the same, in Emily Dickinson's phrase, to "tell all the truth but tell it slant." In other words, to catch something of the genius of the gospels in a fresh and engaging way and to do it positively, broadly, and inclusively.

Albert Blackwell  
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