

Tender Mercies of Our Lord Jesus Christ

November 2017 Issue #3

Newsletter for Latter-day Saint brothers and sisters in prison, and also those imprisoned who are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, yet seek spiritual enrichment and the Savior's peace.

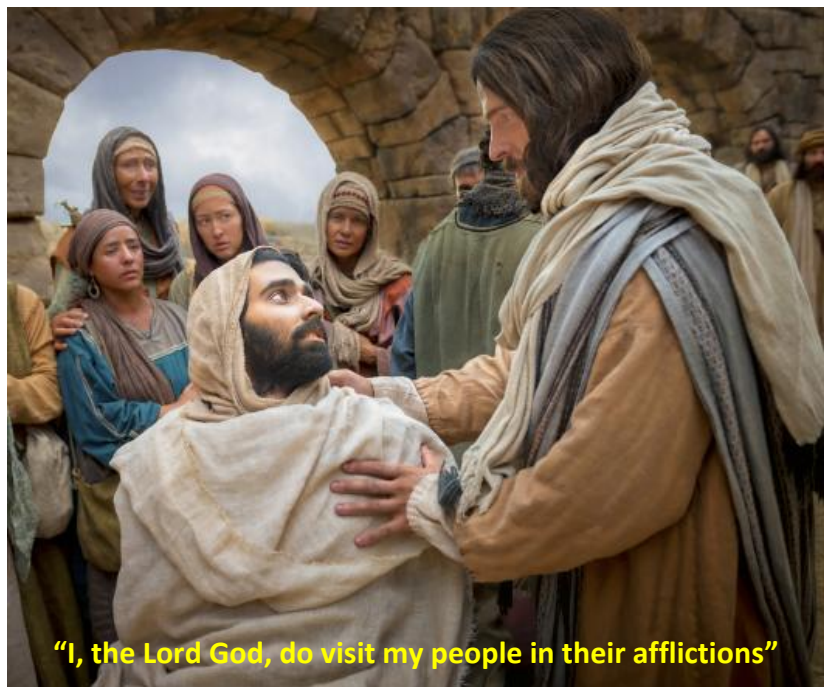
*"...the **tender mercies** of the Lord are over all those whom He hath chosen, because of their faith..." (1 Nephi 20)*

The Music Edition

From the Editor: My dear brothers and sisters. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is literally our elder Brother. During His earthly life He healed many. As the resurrected Lord He has healed and comforted

millions upon millions of us during our greatest trials and sorrows. He has healed and comforted me. I testify that He will heal you as well if you allow Him to do so. During my own greatest trials, **EVERY TIME** I have turned to Him He has been there for me. We must, however, let Him in. We must give Him space in our hearts

and in our very souls. **As soon as we call upon Him He will be there!** Still, we can create a permanent space for Him within us by living a clean life wherein we repent of our sins and keep His commandments. Furthermore, we invite Him into our hearts through sincere prayer, fasting, attending our church services, and reading our scriptures and other spiritual literature (such as conference talks and LDS authored books). I testify that ALL of these work for me. But my message to you this month is that we can also invite the Holy Spirit and the Savior into our hearts through good music. During my great trials I learned many hymns and I sang them to myself daily... especially when I truly needed to feel the comfort **ONLY** the Savior could provide me. I continuously memorized hymns.



"I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions"

This practice has changed my life! Even as I am writing this newsletter and vigorously seeking the Lord's Spirit that I may be inspired as to what to include in this month's issue that might be of most

spiritual benefit to one of you, or even better, all of you – I am listening to Steven Sharp Nelson's album "Tender Mercies; the Sacred Cello Series." This beautiful music helps to enhance my sensitivity to the Spirit. Our very Savior, just before the Atonement, wherein for our sins He endured the greatest of all suffering any man has ever

endured, sang a hymn; for the scripture reads: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Mark 14:26.) I bear witness to you, my cherished and beloved brothers and sisters, that good music uplifts and creates a conduit between the heavens and our own spiritually thirsty and sometimes even fractured hearts. The Lord has said, "For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, **and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.**" (D&C 25:12.) My precious sisters and brothers, learn a few hymns and sing them, even if only in your minds. I have tested this promise and I bear my solemn testimony that these words are true. It will change your lives as it has changed mine. Brother D. J

This month I asked Steven Sharp Nelson of the Piano Guys to address you. He was happy to do so and even honored to write to YOU, his brothers and sisters. This is the same Steven Sharp Nelson that I am listening to on YouTube as I write this. I have heard Brother Nelson speak on numerous occasions. This man truly is a disciple of God. He and his wonderful eternal companion have become an unexpected blessing in my life. He is in great demand, playing to stadiums and vast audiences world-wide. We are very very blessed to hear from him.



My dear incarcerated brothers and sisters, it was dark where I was standing. The roar of the crowd seemed so distant, although I was simply steps away from its exposure. I was halfway through the tour. It had been a difficult one. More than usual. There are many things I love about touring as a musician - things I absolutely adore. But there is a dark side: the travel, the sleep deprivation, the irregular schedule, and the adrenaline rushes often followed by emotional crashes. Where I stood, waiting in the wings of the stage for my cue to walk on, I felt a crushing weight. I felt as though I'd much rather find a quiet corner and curl up into a ball than walk out onto that stage. I was drained, felt sick and weak, I missed home, and I felt no energy, motivation, or even the will to put one foot in front of the other.

I prayed. One word at a time. I felt as though there was nothing else I could do. My spirit reached outside my fatigued physical form into the ether of where things are as they *really* are (Jacob 4:13). I simply said, "Lord, I can't do this." Whether it was because of my urgency, my desperation, or my sincerity that I received an uncommonly immediate answer, I know not. The answer came as a voice that was too sympathetic to be sound. I was feeling *God's voice*. I felt calm wash over me like a basin of warm water poured over my head. He said, "My dear son, when have I ever given you the impression that it's all up to you?" The meaning of what he was urging me to understand held me tight as a bear hug from a loving father should feel. He then said, "You just walk out onto that stage and start playing. I'll take care of the rest." As I did so, I felt as if I were floating several inches above the chair from which I was performing. I simply showed up, with a desire to be an "instrument" in the Lord's hands, and He took it from there.

Why do we so often insist on carrying our own burdens unaided; on hiking our life's mountains without a map; on squeezing sorrow from a situation because we can't see the rose above its thorns? The Lord has pleaded with us to, "Cast our burdens upon Him. And He will sustain us"(Psalm 55:22). He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"(Matthew 11:28-30). He also said "I will ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions"(Mosiah 24:14).

But how could our burdens be light? And how can we cast them on the Lord and take His yoke upon us? It may be simpler than our methodically uncertain world makes it seem. First, we must desire to give ourselves over to the Savior along with the bulk of our burdens (Jeremiah 17:10, Alma 29:4). That is something we can all do regardless of the setting we are in, the burdens we carry, or the "level" at which we think we are.



Second, we must believe he can take the weight of our burdens from us. But even in this, as we may struggle to understand how it is done, or as we strive for the faith necessary, we can ask, as the man who asked the Lord to cast from his son the "foul spirit" inhabiting him, "Lord, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Third, we need to understand that the Lord does not typically take the burden itself from us. Instead, He takes the *weight* from the burden. He allows us to continue carrying the burden so our spiritual muscles do not atrophy [or weaken] and we do not lose the purpose we are to gain in carrying it - a purpose often known only unto Him.

If we yoke ourselves with Him, His burden is "easy" and "light." How can this be so? Perhaps He means it is, relatively, so much *easier* and *lighter* than carrying it on our own, because the load of the burden - our worry, our uncertainty, our fear, our confusion in its purpose, is swallowed up in the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is the meaning, majesty, and miracle of Jesus Christ's Grace. And it is available to all who come unto Him.

And just as it did when I was waiting in the wings of the stage that night, it starts with a prayer. A simple, child-like cry, just as Peter once pleaded as he sank in the water upon which he was attempting to walk, "Lord, save me!" (Matthew 14:30).



I have felt the power of Grace in my life. And I know it is not dispensed according to some secretive schedule - or only after we have met a certain number of rote requirements. His Grace is as a piece of perpetual music with no beginning and no end - from stanza to stanza it calls to all sweetly and serenely. His Grace is as His love - unconditional unto all who seek it.

I believe that happiness is the object and design of our existence (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith 255-56). Happiness is best found in the peace that comes from following Jesus Christ (John 14:27). His peace is not as the world attempts to give us - with ephemeral (or momentary) moments of materialistic pleasure, but with lasting joy, built firmly upon His foundation of truth, light and Goodness. I know God is in the details of our lives. His greatest desire for us is to turn our weakness into strength (Ether 12:27) - to turn our righteous desires into our Divine destiny. I know that God loves us and is ready to encircle us in the arms of His love any time we ask Him to (D&C 6:20). I love you, my brethren and sisters, and I pray God's blessings, love, and Grace to be upon you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

--Steven Sharp Nelson

From the Tabernacle

Messages From Music and the Spoken Word

3,000th BROADCAST

Given by]. Spencer Kinard

February 15, 1987

This is the 3,000th broadcast of *Music and the Spoken Word* - three thousand times, each week, for years, for decades, for more than half of a century now - lifting its voices, casting its hymns and anthems along the electronic airways of a nation: not for compensation nor commendation sings the Choir, but for the simple joy of being and in praise of Him who gave us song.

It was summer then, of 1929 - a Monday afternoon. And, on that day, a new program - a fledgling broadcast from somewhere out in the West of choral and organ music. Hymns of religious nature, familiar tunes, and soaring strains from the great pipe organ came crackling across the radio waves of a national network on that afternoon of '29. And none too soon, for the nation would need music, songs to soothe broken spirits, cheerful melodies to raise battered hopes - for this was the start of the Great Depression.

And so, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sang on - sang on through the Great Depression, sang on through social and economic growth. The broadcast was changed to Sunday, but the program remained the same - people singing to people.

Then came a war, and America's young men marched off - marched off to fight and die for a belief, an intangible called freedom; and, the voice of the Choir became soft and hushed, sharing the world's sorrows, praying for the return of sons and fathers, hoping for the return of peace.

With the end of World War II came prosperity - prosperity as the world had never known ... free men, with singing hearts and hammers, sons of immigrants, grandsons of the tired and poor, the rejected, the pioneers and adventurous of all nations ... here at last, free to live, to love, to learn, and to work - especially to work. To these and of these sang the Choir - these builders of a nation.

Not perfect, not complete, ever changing and repairing: social strife, marches, even riots - maintaining the dream for all, sustaining the standards set by those who came before, perhaps the essence of what is good in all men, distilled here from among the nations in this cauldron of humanity. It is this ideal which has been a primary theme to the Choir - songs of praise for a nation which has become synonymous with hope, equivalent to liberty - a sanctuary for the dreams of man.

In all of history's days and times, there has been nothing like us - a nation of free individuals, each pursuing his or her own definition of happiness, we became poets and philosophers, takers of untraveled roads, riders of whirlwinds, and dreamers of dreams. Discovery, investigation, challenge, trudging upward across chasm and through mountain pass, searching, reaching, grasping at the stars - this became our inheritance.

Music speaks a universal tongue, for song is every person's native language. Beyond words, above speech, transcending even thought, is music. Like the towering spires of gothic cathedrals, music's prayerful hymns point our hearts toward the billowing heavens, and to God.

Of what, then, the value of this or any choir? As well asked the worth of the russet nightingale which casts its trembling songs into the gathering darkness for unseen ears to hear. As well asked the merit of the desert flower which blooms in solitary places, where no human face is, to waste its fragrance on secluded air.

Choirs, nightingales, and flowers - these exist for beauty's sake, and beauty has its own excuse for being. Their value is not to be appraised in terms of the marketplace. But, there is a wealth which even wealth can never buy - a wealth of feeling, whole treasures of thought, and floods of memories ... evoked as we are touched by song. This, then, is the value of a choir - not to measure harmony and tone, but to transmit human thought and yearnings across the barriers of loneliness which keep men apart.

As seashells sing of their lost sea, so sings the Choir from the sea of human memory ... tides of melody in pensive tones, sweet and strong, stirring the hearers pulse to hints of love and home, of mother's lullaby, of father's morning whistle, the spirit roused to reminiscence through music's calming balm. Like the unpretentious candle which glows on through the night - softly, graciously, freely shedding its light, the Choir sings on ... friend of the friendless, counselor to doubt, guardian of beauty, and oracle of inner joys. Ask not, then, the worth of a choir. It has no cash value ... for it is priceless.

BEHIND THE HYMNS:

I Believe in Christ Bruce R. McConkie

1. I believe in Christ; he is my King!
With all my heart to him I'll sing;
I'll raise my voice in praise and joy,
In grand amens my tongue employ.
I believe in Christ; he is God's Son.
On earth to dwell his soul did come.
He healed the sick; the dead he raised.
Good works were his; his name be praised.

3. I believe in Christ—my Lord, my God!
My feet he plants on gospel sod.
I'll worship him with all my might;
He is the source of truth and light.
I believe in Christ; he ransoms me.
From Satan's grasp he sets me free,
And I shall live with joy and love
In his eternal courts above

2. I believe in Christ; oh blessed name!
As Mary's Son he came to reign
'Mid mortal men, his earthly kin,
To save them from the woes of sin.
I believe in Christ, who marked the path,
Who did gain all his Father hath,
Who said to men: "Come, follow me,
That ye, my friends, with God may be."

4. I believe in Christ; he stands supreme!
From him I'll gain my fondest dream;
And while I strive through grief and pain,
His voice is heard: "Ye shall obtain."
I believe in Christ; so come what may,
With him I'll stand in that great day
When on this earth he comes again
To rule among the sons of men.

Coming straight from the heart of a man who had devoted his life to studying about the Savior and serving him, the text of this hymn is truly a powerful declaration of faith in Jesus Christ, a definitive testimony of His divinity and mission.

The members of the Church first heard the words of this hymn when Elder Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered them as part of his general conference address in April 1972. Elder McConkie's widow, Amelia S. McConkie, said that her husband "loved to express his love for the scriptures and Christ in poetry." The eight verses attracted considerable attention. They were first given an



anthem setting by Latter-day Saint composer Rhea B. Allen and were performed by the Tabernacle Choir. The simpler hymn setting, created by John Longhurst for the 1985 hymnal, was introduced to the Church by the Tabernacle Choir at general conference in April 1985. John Longhurst noted, "This was Elder McConkie's last conference - the one in which he left his final testimony in a way that those who heard it shall never forget."

At that conference, Elder McConkie bore a powerful, moving witness of Jesus Christ: "I testify that he is the Son of the Living God and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. This I know of myself independent of any other person.

"I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

"But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way."

The words of this hymn are the words of a servant of the Lord who spent his life speaking and writing about the Savior. The text is a grand and sweeping testimony of Jesus Christ. Doubt and unhappiness disappear as faith in Jesus Christ dominates every thought and feeling.

The powerful musical setting in our hymnbook, as unwavering as the text, emphasizes the uplifting and positive nature of the words. As John Longhurst was working on the music, his first impulse was to cut the number of verses from eight to four, since he felt this length to be about right for current hymn usage. But Elder McConkie, whose health at that time did not permit extensive revision or collaboration with regard to this hymn, wished all eight verses of his testimony to be included. The solution was to create an eight-line hymn instead of a four-line hymn; each hymn verse actually includes two verses of the original poem.



Bruce Redd McConkie (July 29, 1915 – April 19, 1985) was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) from 1972 until his death. McConkie was a member of the First Council of the Seventy of the LDS Church from 1946 until his calling to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

During his service as a general authority, McConkie published several doctrinal books and articles and wrote the chapter headings of the LDS Church's 1979–81 editions of the standard works.^[1]

McConkie received a Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor from the University of Utah. He spent his childhood between Monticello, Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1937, he married Amelia Smith (1916–2005), a daughter of Joseph Fielding Smith, who would later become president of the LDS Church.

Points to Ponder:

I Stand All Amazed



A young man found the Church. He had been raised in Southern California in the days of hippies, flower children, motorcycles, boulevard cruising, beaches, and drugs. He had been "physically active" with women. As he tried to keep all of Heavenly Father's commandments, Satan of course had different plans. He soon learned that Satan would be relentless in trying to keep him from making these positive and worthy changes in his life. At first he was confused, for he thought the Savior would remove such temptations from him because of his righteous desires. But, in truth, Satan fights even harder to capture souls who are newly turning to the Lord's side. Satan knows his best chance of stopping them from becoming disciples of Jesus Christ is BEFORE

they become keepers of the commandments and faithful. The young man, despite his righteous desires and fervent prayers, was being tempted heavily to act upon "physical sin." He heard the hymn "I Stand All Amazed" and it had a powerful impact on him. He soon memorized the hymn. Then, when Satan came to tempt him with "physical sins" the young man would sing "I Stand All Amazed" over and over again. This had a huge impact on his ability to withstand the fiery darts of temptation Satan hurled at him with vengeance. He withstood the temptations... sometimes only barely escaping... but he did withstand. Soon this young man served a faithful mission and was married in the Lord's temple. The hymns DO make a difference!

Favorite Scriptures:



Find these and mark them in your own set of scriptures

Book of Mormon:

"Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises." (Psalm 47:6-7)

"And they did sing praises unto the Lord; yea, the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord." (Ether 6:9)

:Old Testament

Doctrine and Covenants:

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col 3:16)

"And it shall be given thee, also, to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church." (D&C 25:11)

:New Testament

Pearl of Great Price:

"We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may." (A of F #11)

How Gladys Knight Became a Mormon by Jamie Lawson Armstrong

Gladys Knight's spiritual journey began when she was 2 years old.

"We had an old banged up piano in the hall," she recalls. "I remember even that far back having our own family home evening, if you will. My mom and dad used to play the piano and sing and tell Bible stories. As I grew, I started wanting more and more of that. Christ really became that person that I longed for. I wanted to be good for Him."

That little girl from Georgia would have to wait decades before finding the fulness of the gospel, but that didn't stop her from letting her light shine and sharing her talents in the meantime.



Gladys began singing at age four, and at just seven years old had her first taste of fame when she won Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour TV show contest in 1952. The next year, she, her sister Brenda, her brother Merald, and cousins Eleanor and William Guest formed a musical group called the Pips—named after her cousin, James "Pip" Woods.

Brenda and Eleanor were eventually replaced with cousin Edward Patten and friend Langston George, and the group went on their first national tour when Gladys was 11 years old. In 1966, Gladys Knight & the Pips signed with Motown Records, where despite Gladys's powerful voice and the Pips' smooth vocals and impressive dance moves, they were still considered a second-class act. They soon exceeded expectations, however, with the release of several hit singles, including "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," "Friendship Train," and "I Don't Want to Do Wrong."

The act signed with Buddah Records in 1973 and achieved a new level of success with the R&B chart topper and Grammy-winning "Midnight Train to Georgia," as well as "I've Got to Use My Imagination," and "You're the Best Thing That Ever Happened to Me."

Though Gladys achieved fame at a young age, she didn't fall victim to the vices that often come with it. "We took the Spirit with us," she says. "We stood out from everybody else. I didn't do drugs, and I didn't drink. Everyone began to expect me to be different."

But there were times when the expectations became too much, and she didn't want to perform anymore. "I wanted to be like the rest of the teens," she recalls. "I didn't want to sing. But I realized that my voice is my gift from God, and I have an obligation to use it. God chose me for this, and I needed to stop fighting it."

So she continues to share her music to this day. The Pips retired in 1988, and Gladys has enjoyed a successful solo career ever since.

Gladys's faith in God has been a driving force throughout her life, and her thirst for light and knowledge, along with the example of her children, helped prepare her to accept the gospel.

"I raised my children to seek the Lord. We had been searching for the best of the Lord, the most of the Lord," she recalls. "My son Jimmy and his wife were the first to join the Church, after his best friend shared his testimony. Then my daughter, Kenya, joined the Church. I watched their lives grow, and to see how my grandchildren were being raised and what they knew really impressed me."

At her daughter's invitation, Gladys began attending Relief Society. "After a while, Kenya told me, 'Mom, it's time for you to talk to the missionaries.'" And so she did.

"When the missionaries came to my house, we had the most beautiful prayer," Gladys recalls. "I loved the fact that when they came in they did not try to sell me on the Church—they just told me about the gospel. My mom, who I consider to be the most spiritual woman I've ever met, wasn't a member, but she said, 'You go.' Those were basically her last words."





Gladys joined the Church in 1997 and was baptized by her son Jimmy. “I feel so blessed because my son held the priesthood and was able to baptize me,” she says. “It is such a precious thing to me. I was overjoyed.”

Years after divorcing, Gladys married longtime friend William McDowell in 2001, and he joined the Church the following year. “He is such an awesome man,” she says. “He has a sense of the Lord like no one else who has ever been in my life. He gets it.”

Since becoming a Latter-day Saint, Gladys has boldly shared her beliefs despite being met with some surprise and skepticism from the black community.

“It didn’t affect my career,” she says of her baptism. “People pretty much expect me to walk my own road, and I’ve never regretted it once. But some people questioned why I joined this church...”

She explains, “I lived through segregation. I love my brothers and sisters of color and respect all we have been through, but we have to stop judging what others look like. The more you get into the gospel, the more you can get rid of that.” She adds, “Now it’s time for people of color to come to His church. It’s just our time.”

However, being a black Southern convert had its challenges, especially when it came to Church culture. “We were the only African American people in our ward for years,” Gladys says. “The culture has been so European for so long, the music reflects it, the way Mormons react to things is very reserved. African Americans need fire in our bones—music that puts us on our feet or on our knees. To transform to the European way is one of the greatest obstacles to coming to this church.” But, she says, “I feel like I am in the right place and I’m loving it.”

Gladys’s desire to add “a little something” to Church music eventually inspired her to create an all-volunteer, multicultural LDS choir that would bring a new level of energy and cultural awareness to traditional hymns.

The choir, called the Saints Unified Voices, is comprised of more than 100 people and has a two-fold purpose. First, they aim to spread the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ by providing an opportunity for people who wouldn’t otherwise enter an LDS meetinghouse to feel the Spirit. Second, they desire to help members of the Church embrace the cultural diversity of people worldwide coming into the Lord’s kingdom. “Never in a million years did I ever dream that I would be the director of a choir like this—one that showcases the energy, the fire, and the heart of the music of our culture,” she says.

Conference Talks – The Best of the Best...

“Worship through Music”

Dallin H. Oaks, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, October 1994

Last spring I made my first visit to Brasília, Brazil. Over three thousand Saints gathered for a regional conference. The printed program listed the musical numbers, but the Portuguese words meant nothing to me. But when their beautiful choir began to sing, the music crossed all barriers of language and spoke to my soul:

The morning breaks, the shadows flee; Lo, Zion’s standard is unfurled! ...

The dawning of a brighter day, Majestic rises on the world.

Through the miracle of sacred music, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon us, and we were made ready for gospel instruction and worship.

The First Presidency has said:

“Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns invite the Spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.

“Some of the greatest sermons are preached by the singing of hymns. Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end”
(Hymns, 1985, p. ix).

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to put ourselves in tune with the Spirit of the Lord. I wonder if we are making enough use of this heaven-sent resource in our meetings, in our classes, and in our homes. Last July I visited the Church's Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii. Before the evening show of dancing and music from various island cultures, I went backstage to thank the performers. I arrived during those frantic moments before the show began. Scores of performers were hurrying through the last-minute tasks required to coordinate their efforts in a fast-moving performance. I wondered how the director would bring this turmoil to order in preparation for my brief remarks. It happened as if by miracle. On signal, one strong voice began, and the strains of "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" quickly swelled into a beautiful chorus as the uniquely talented young people brought their thoughts into harmony with the Lord.

We had a similar experience in our family. Last spring some of our children and fourteen of our grandchildren had a family outing in the mountains. One of our activities was a meeting to share experiences and testimonies. We gathered at the appointed time, but the little people were only gathered in body. The large spirits

in those little bodies were clamoring for more of the exciting outdoor activities they had been enjoying. The cabin where we met was too small to contain them, and it seemed as if a dozen restless children and their outcries were ricocheting off the walls in every direction. Grandparents will appreciate the apprehension I felt at trying to sponsor something serious in that setting. Suddenly the instinctive wisdom of young mothers rescued our efforts. Two mothers began to sing a song familiar to the children. Others joined in, and within a few minutes the mood had changed and all spirits were subdued and receptive to spiritual things. I offered a silent prayer of thanks for hymns and for mothers who know how to use them!

The singing of hymns is one of the best ways to learn the doctrine of the restored gospel. Elder Stephen D. Nadauld captured this unique strength in some lines he wrote and shared in a General Authority meeting:

"If I would teach with power, The doctrine and the plan, I'd wish for gentle music, To prepare the soul of man. And then to press forever, These truths upon his mind, We'd sing the hymns of Zion, With their messages sublime."

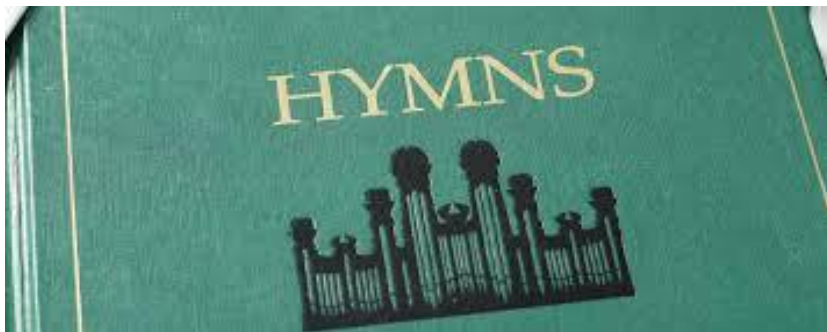
The scriptures contain many affirmations that hymn singing is a glorious way to worship. Before the Savior and his Apostles left the upper room where they had the sublime experience of the Last Supper, they sang a hymn. After their hymn, the Savior led them to the Mount of Olives (see [Matt. 26:30](#)).

The Apostle Paul advised the Colossians that they should be *"teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"* ([Col. 3:16](#); see also [Alma 26:8](#)).

Modern revelation reaffirms the importance of sacred music. In one of the earliest revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord appointed Emma Smith *"to make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church."* *"For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads"* ([D&C 25:11–12](#)). In a revelation given through another prophet a generation later, the Lord commanded his people *"to praise the Lord with singing, [and] with music"* ([D&C 136:28](#)).

This direction to praise the Lord with singing is not limited to large meetings. When the Lord's Apostles meet in modern times, the singing of hymns is still part of their meetings. The weekly meetings of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the Salt Lake Temple always begin with a hymn. Elder Russell M. Nelson plays the organ accompaniment. The First Presidency, who conduct these meetings, rotate the privilege of selecting the opening song. Most of us record the date each hymn is sung. According to my records, the opening song most frequently sung during the decade of my participation has been "I Need Thee Every Hour" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 98). Picture the spiritual impact of a handful of the Lord's servants singing that song before praying for his guidance in fulfilling their mighty responsibilities.





The veil is very thin in the temples, especially when we join in worshipping through music. At temple dedications I have seen more tears of joy elicited by music than by the spoken word. I have read accounts of angelic choirs joining in these hymns of praise, and I think I have experienced this on several occasions. In dedicatory sessions featuring beautiful and well-trained choirs of about thirty voices, there

are times when I have heard what seemed to be ten times thirty voices praising God with a quality and intensity of feeling that can be experienced but not explained. Some who are listening today will know what I mean.

Sacred music has a unique capacity to communicate our feelings of love for the Lord. This kind of communication is a wonderful aid to our worship. Many have difficulty expressing worshipful feelings in words, but all can join in communicating such feelings through the inspired words of our hymns.

When a congregation worships through singing, all present should participate. Here I share another experience. I had finished a special assignment on a Sunday morning in Salt Lake City and desired to attend a sacrament meeting. I stopped at a convenient ward meetinghouse and slipped unnoticed into the overflow area just as the congregation was beginning to sing these sacred words of the sacrament song:

*'Tis sweet to sing the matchless love, Of Him who left his home above
And came to earth—oh, wondrous plan—To suffer, bleed, and die for man!*

My heart swelled as we sang this worshipful hymn and contemplated renewing our covenants by partaking of the sacrament. Our voices raised the concluding strains:

*For Jesus died on Calvary, That all thru him might ransomed be.
Then sing hosannas to his name; Let heav'n and earth his love proclaim.*

As we sang these words, I glanced around at members of the congregation and was stunned to observe that about a third of them were not singing. How could this be? Were those who did not even mouth the words suggesting that for them it was *not* “sweet to sing the matchless love” or to “sing hosannas to his name”? What are we saying, what are we thinking, when we fail to join in singing in our worship services? I believe some of us in North America are getting neglectful in our worship, including the singing of hymns. I have observed that the Saints elsewhere are more diligent in doing this. We in the center stakes of Zion should renew our fervent participation in the singing of our hymns.

There are a few conventions all of us should observe as we worship through music. As we sing we should think about the messages of the words. Our hymns contain matchless doctrinal sermons, surpassed only by the scriptures in their truth and poetic impact.

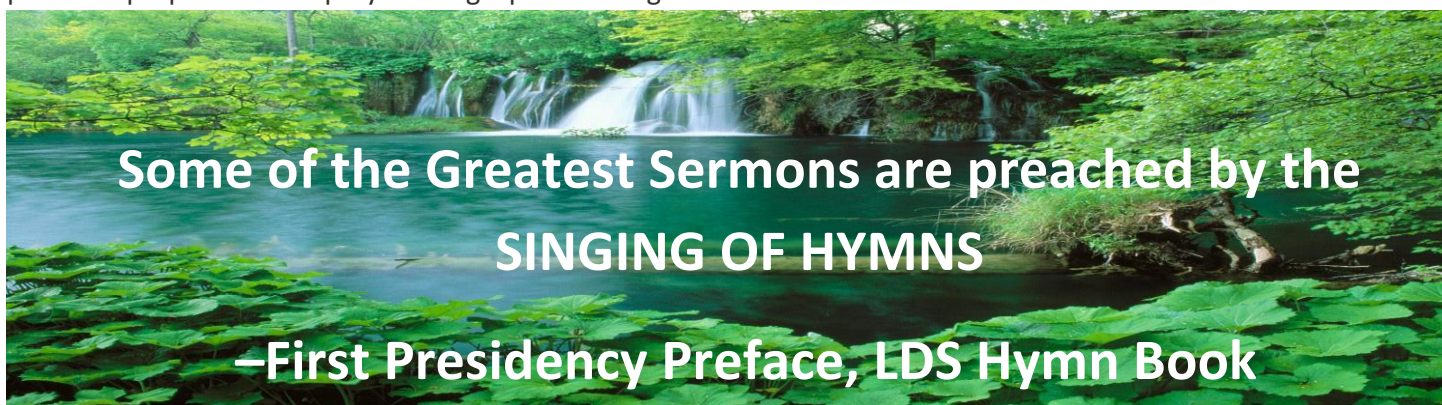
We should be careful what music we use in settings where we desire to contribute to worship. Many musical numbers good for other wholesome settings are not appropriate for Church meetings. Our hymns have been chosen because they have been proven effective to invite the Spirit of the Lord. A daughter who plays the violin described that reality. “I love to play classical music,” she said, “but when I play our hymns, I can just feel the Spirit of the Lord in my practice room.” Soloists should remember that music in our worship services is not for demonstration but for worship. Vocal or instrumental numbers should be chosen to facilitate worship, not to provide performance opportunity for artists, no matter how accomplished.

Our sacred music prepares us to be taught the truths of the gospel. This is why we are selective in the kinds of music and the kinds of instruments we use in our worship services. This is why we encourage our choirs to use the hymnbook as their basic resource. We can make selective use of other music that is in harmony with the spirit of our hymns, such as Charles



Gounod's marvelous "O Divine Redeemer," sung at the funeral of President Ezra Taft Benson. But a hymnbook's hymn is often the most inspiring and appropriate musical selection for a choir, a vocalist, or an instrumentalist. **Sacred music can help us even where there is no formal performance. For example, when temptation comes, we can neutralize its effect by humming or repeating the words of a favorite hymn (see Boyd K. Packer, *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, pp. 25–28).**

Our hymns can work their miraculous effect even when the chorus of voices is few and even when hardly a sound can be heard. I felt this a few months ago as I participated in a musical performance that was unique in my church experience. I had been invited to speak at the Great Basin LDS Deaf Conference, hosted by the Salt Lake Valley (Deaf) Ward of the Salt Lake Park Stake. Over three hundred deaf brothers and sisters were in attendance. The members of the stake presidency and I were almost the only adults in the congregation who could hear and who attempted to sing audibly. The rest of that large assembly sang with their hands. Hardly a lip moved, and hardly a sound was heard except the organ and four faint voices from the stand. In the audience, all hands moved in unison with the leader as the audience signed "The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 2). As we sang together, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon us, and we were made ready for prayer. Our sacred music is a powerful preparation for prayer and gospel teaching.



We need to make more use of our hymns to put us in tune with the Spirit of the Lord, to unify us, and to help us teach and learn our doctrine. We need to make better use of our hymns in missionary teaching, in gospel classes, in quorum meetings, in home evenings, and in home teaching visits. Music is an effective way to worship our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration. We who have "felt to sing the song of redeeming love" ([Alma 5:26](#)) need to keep singing that we may draw ever closer to him who has inspired sacred music and commanded that it be used to worship him. May we be diligent in doing so is my humble prayer, which I offer with a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the divine calling of those we have sustained today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

*Well my beloved brothers and sisters, I hope and I pray that all of you will allow the joy, peace, and comfort that can only come from the Savior, through the Holy Spirit, to enter into your hearts and your minds and your very souls. This can happen in many ways, but in this month's newsletter I have emphasized becoming closer to the Spirit through the hymns and other spiritual music. **Why would any of us leave unused a means to feel the peace of the Spirit?** I testify to all of you that learning a few hymns can truly change your life. Some of the ones I chose to memorize are: Oh My Father, How Firm a Foundation, I Know That My Redeemer Lives, More Holiness Give Me, How Great Thou Art, I Stand All Amazed, Oh How Lovely Was The Morning, Choose the Right and many others. Memorizing Sacrament Hymns is an especially effective means of feeling the Spirit of the Sacrament in the absence of the actual Sacrament. I testify to each of you that if you will learn just a few hymns to sing when you are down and pleading with the Father and the Son for comfort, that comfort you seek WILL come through the singing of those hymns. I testify of this because IT HAS HAPPENED in my own life and still continues to happen today! When I am a little down and driving to or from work, or even while working, singing these hymns still has great power to lift me and bring the comfort we all seek. I sing them silently when lonely at night as I fall asleep. This is a sure way to invite the Savior's peace into ANY situation. I love you all! And I bear this testimony in Jesus' Name, amen. **Too many of our brothers & sisters are still NOT on the mailing list. Please send more inmate names and numbers!!! It is up to YOU!!!***

–Bro. J