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2016 - The Book of Isaiah

A New Song. A Skillful Song.

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Church of the Servant

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Adam Tice, Retreat 3Handout

More ground rules, nearly all of which I have broken:

Accurately represent your theology, and the theology of your community. Attempt to do so in a way that allows other individuals and communities to sing your work with integrity. *Using inclusive language for humanity is a necessary component if you want your work to be useful.*

There is no good reason to use archaic language. We are not trying to communicate with the 17th century. We're writing for the 21st.

If you write with a tune in mind, try your text with other tunes of the same meter to make sure it works consistently.

Avoid awkward inversions: "The Lord to me a Shepherd is;/want therefore shall not I"

Rhymes that are overused (and best avoided when possible):
time/rhyme; love/dove/above; God/rod/sod/trod; life/strife

Be brutal with your own work. If something doesn't feel right, chuck it. Aspire to perfection. Be willing to tweak. The Holy Spirit does not typically drop a complete hymn into your computer, but rather inspires the hard work, creativity, and persistence to develop something good.

Identify your favorite hymns and songs. What kind of structure do they have? What "works" about them? Learn about their writers, and the context of the writing.

Look through your hymnal for texts by modern writers. Identify some writers you like, and look up collections of their work. Study.

Find someone to read your work and critique it. Someone honest and knowledgeable, not just someone whom you can impress!

Get *Lessons in Hymnwriting*, Gracia Grindal, and *Anatomy of Hymnody* by Austin Lovelace. Inquire through The Hymn Society.

The best textbooks on text/lyric writing: *Finishing the Hat* and *Look, I Made a Hat*, the collected lyrics (with commentary) of Stephen Sondheim. His foundational rules:

Content dictates form. Less is more. God is in the details.

Join The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada (www.thehymnsociety.org) and go to the annual conference.

**The difference between the almost right word and the right word
is the same as that between a lightning bug and lightning.**

--Mark Twain--

In Simple Signs

Meter: LM

In simple signs we find God's grace:
a healing hand, a gentle face,
the loveless loved, the hungry fed,
a cup of wine, a piece of bread.

In human flesh, born weak and poor,
Christ shows the way through heaven's door,
to realms not lost in clouds above,
but found where people live in love.

In humble form, not grasping might,
not girded for an epic fight,
but as a servant, free from pride,
the Son of God is glorified.

In dying things, God breathes new life
so peace can grow from times of strife
and hope endure through pain and loss,
as love prevails beyond the cross.

Text: Adam M. L. Tice, 2012; © 2013, GIA Publications, Inc.

In *Worship & Mission After Christendom*, Alan and Eleanor Kreider note that few hymns address the servanthood theme of Philippians 2:6–11 (p. 173). This text is an effort to fill that gap. It explores God's apparent preference for poor and simple things (and people) as sacramental means of encountering the divine.

Scripture: Philippians 2:5–9, James 2:1–5

Themes: Jesus, Servanthood

An Echo of the Voice of God

Fine

1. This cry, this groan, this psalm pour - ing out, pour - ing out, an
 2. This chant, this hum, this song ris - ing up, ris - ing up, an
 3. This hush, this rest, this prayer, soft and still, soft and still, an

ech - o of the voice of God.
 ech - o of the voice of God.
 ech - o of the voice of God.

D.C.

* "Swing" eighth notes except where indicated otherwise.

Text: Adam M. L. Tice, 2007; © 2009, GIA Publications, Inc.
 Tune: WADA TUNE; Sally Ann Morris, b. 1952; © 2009, GIA Publications, Inc.

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I Saw a River Flowing

Meter: 7 7 8 6 8 7 8 7

I saw a river flowing
bright as crystal in the sun.
Through the center of the city,
its living waters run.
And beside that rushing river,
trees abound with leaves of green
that bring healing to the nations
as God's holy face is seen.

I saw a river flowing
where the peace of God is known:
in the center of the city,
the Lamb is on the throne.
And along that rushing river,
every culture, class, and race
joins the healing of the nations,
born of justice, love, and grace.

I saw a river flowing
gleaming like the sun on snow
through the center of the city;
the waters seem to glow,
for upon that rushing river
shines a never-fading light
that brings healing to the nations,
and a world with no more night.

Text: Adam M. L. Tice, 2012; © 2013, GIA Publications, Inc.

Upon receiving a wonderful first tune from Benjamin Brody (see “Sing a Story of the Maker”), I regretted that I had not set aside any additional texts for him to work with—so I decided to write him one. I chose the vivid image of the river at the heart of the city from Revelation. Having lived near the Anacostia river outside of Washington, DC, I am struck that the vision of a crystal clear waterway in an urban area has profound environmental implications. Brody named his tune ALEPPO as a prayer for the war-torn city in Syria.

Scripture: Psalm 46:4–5, Ezekiel 47:1–12, Revelation 22:1–5

Themes: Healing, Justice, Peace

1. I saw a riv - er flow - ing bright as crys - tal in the sun. Through the
2. I saw a riv - er flow - ing gleam - ing like the sun on snow through the
3. I saw a riv - er flow - ing where the peace of God is known: in the

C/E F G Am F G(no3)

cen - ter of the cit - y, its liv - ing wa - ters run. And be -
 cen - ter of the cit - y; the wa - ters seem to glow For up -
 cen - ter of the cit - y, the Lamb is on the throne. And a -

C/E F GSUS4 Am FADD9 GADD9

side that rush - ing riv - er, trees a - bound with leaves of green that bring
 on that rush - ing riv - er shines a nev - er - fad - ing light that brings
 long that rush - ing riv - er, ev - 'ry cul - ture, class, and race, joins the

Am C/G FADD9 C/E F GADD9

heal - ing to the na - tions as God's ho - ly face is seen.
 heal - ing to the na - tions, and a world with no more night.
 heal - ing of the na - tions, born of jus - tice, love, and grace.

B♭ F/A Fm/A♭ C/G F B♭ C(no3)

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 Music: ALEPPO; Benjamin Brody, b.1975; © 2013, GIA Publications, Inc.

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The more I ask, the less I know.
The more I stretch, the less I grow.
The more I strive, the less I earn.
The more I grasp, the less I learn.

Every longing has its time;
for everything there is a season.
None but God can ever know
the rhyme and reason.

My foolishness I understand.
My treasure fills my empty hand.
My hope is but a fleeting breath;
my greatest work will end in death.

Every longing has its time;
for everything there is a season.
None but God can ever know
the rhyme and reason.

What shall I do if all is vain?
What good can come of grief and pain?
What is the point of futile strife?
What is my purpose in this life?

Every longing has its time;
for everything there is a season.
None but God can ever know
the rhyme and reason.

Every longing has its time;
for everything there is a season.
In God's hands, all things will find
a rhyme and reason.

October 5, 2015
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