

Bible Study Series “Singing the Unsung”
Session Two - What We Sing
(*Could also be called “Pastoral songs”*)

Psalms - positive and negative songs

We need to give importance to the “negative” songs: for some people, they will not experience the liberty to shout “Hallelujah” if, within them, there is a need to ask “how long?”

Being the Body of Christ is about sharing in each others’ pain and each others’ joy.

The purpose of the liturgy isn’t just to let us feel good; the purpose of the liturgy is to allow the whole Body of Christ - those who weep as well as those who dance - to be presented before their maker

song: Hear Me, Lord, and Draw Near

Story of El Salvador (friend, William Ramirez)

Some of the psalms of injustice are omitted from the lectionary

song: O Great God and Lord of the Earth

When we sing the Psalms, there’s a great repertoire of different emotions which are meant to be offered, not just what we feel towards God or what we think God would like us to sing, but that also allow us - across the church and across the world - to *feel for* and to *represent* other people.

“The song of the church, among other things, is a pastoral song”

At funerals, hymns are often chosen from a very short list. This can enable those who aren’t at church very often to join in – a funeral is not a good time to introduce a new tune.

We don’t have a lot of songs of healing

Community of Iona in Scotland since 1938; Christians have gathered on that small, Scottish island since the 6th Century

song: We Cannot Measure How You Heal (uses Scottish folk tune)

Story of Edith - living with someone with Alzheimers
How does the church respond to this? Singing for those going through sickness, and those who care for them

song: How Can We Know How Long You Wait

Story of funeral preparations for Ms Buercher - learned that her story was more than working in an insurance office. Jewish person in 1940s came for help in Amsterdam.

song: Go Silent Friend (tune: Londonderry Air)



“The song of God’s people has to be a song praise, yes; a song of lament at times, yes; a song which expresses our personal joy, yes; a song which deals with our common aspirations, yes; but also a song which indicates that the God whom we worship is a God of justice. And sadly, from many churches in the Northern Hemisphere, not in the South, not in Guatemala, not in Mexico, not in Peru, not in Zimbabwe, not in Malawi, not in South Africa, not in Indonesia, not in Nepal, but in the north, because we presume that God is on our side. We don’t sing songs of justice.”

(John Bell, from *Living the Questions* 2.0)

Some questions for discussion:

Why is it important for liturgy to strive for its potential of “offering to God that which a minority of people might be experiencing” in the company of other people?

How does knowing the origins of these songs affect not only your experience of singing them, but your connection with others?

How does *what* we sing matter?