

Hymn Sing, notes by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 14050821
Romans 12:1-8 and Matthew 16:13-20
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 21 August, 2005

I Sing the Mighty Power of God

When Isaac Watts revolutionized hymn-singing in churches in the early 1700s, people complained that his “flights of fancy” were displacing the traditional singing of the Psalms. Fourteen hymns composed by Watts are in our *New Century Hymnal*. Many of the old favorites include *From All that Dwell Below the Skies*, *Joy to the World*, *Jesus Shall Reign Wherever the Sun*, *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*. *I Sing the Mighty Power of God* was published in his 1715 volume entitled *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*. It is a song of praise for Creation and Providence.

Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.3For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

“Living for Jesus”

Thomas Chisholm wrote *Living for Jesus* as a hymn of personal faith and commitment. The hymn represents the Scripture read from Romans: Each of us is to be a living sacrifice to God. This hymn is unusual in that Harold Lowden wrote and named the tune first, and sent it to Chisholm to write a poem to it.

“The Church of Christ in Every Age”

Fred Pratt Green is a contemporary of ours, composing this hymn in 1969, a time of great social change. The hymn confronts us with the need for the church to change to meet the needs of the world. It brings hope and vigor to congregations that feel they are in the waning years of life.

Matthew 16:13-20 (P. 17, NT)

13Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” 14And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18And I

tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” 20Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

“Christ for the World We Sing”

This popular 19th Century hymn reflects our mission as followers of Jesus Christ. Composer Samuel Wolcott (1813-1886) reminds us that the poor, the mourning, the faint, are our responsibility to bring to Christ who is the healer. The church is not a building, but the followers of Jesus Christ. We who have repeated Peter’s confession have the obligation to continue Jesus’ healing work here on earth.

“Forward Through the Ages”

Sir Arthur S. Sullivan, a member of the Masonry order of Knights Templar, teamed up with William S. Gilbert to write light opera such as the Pirates of Penzance. Sullivan wrote the tune to *Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain...* of triumphant gladness. Sullivan wrote the tune entitled St. Gertrude.

Frederick Hosmer, who served Congregational and Unitarian churches, felt a passion for social justice. It was he who wrote the words to this tune in 1908. *Forward Through The Ages* reflects the thoughts of both of today’s scripture lessons: We are a living sacrifice. Each of us has gifts in differing measure. We come together in the faith to heal the hurt in this the world that Jesus came to save.

“Nearer, My God, to Thee”

Sarah Flower Adams, a laywoman, was part of the “evangelical stream” of 19th century British hymn writers. Such hymns reflected the emotional outpourings of personal devotion to Christ. Adams wrote the words to this poem in 1841. They reflect Jacob’s dream of a ladder linking earth to heaven.

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”

“Doxa” in Greek means “glory” or “honor.” As we bring our offerings forward, we bring them to honor and glorify God. Our Doxology is adapted from the words of St. Francis of Assisi written in 1225. It is sung to the German tune, *Lasst uns Erfreuen*, “Let us be joyful, written in 1623.

“Take My Life and let it Be”

Frances Ridley Havergal was reared in a parsonage in England. She was highly cultured, excelling in linguistics and music. She identified herself with the evangelical movement within the church of England and wrote more than fifty hymns in common usage. Havergal wrote this hymn following an unusually vivid prayer experience. Each stanza of this hymn reflects a deepening consecration of everything we are and everything we have to God.