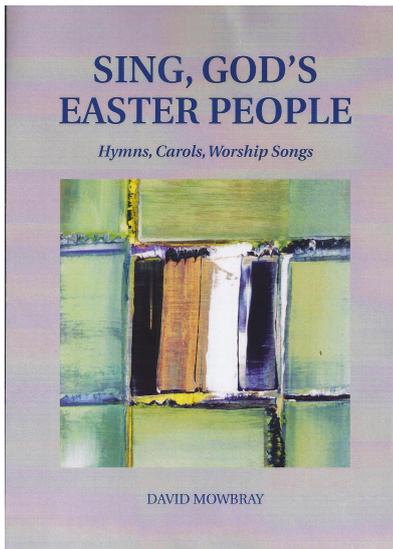


## Sing, God's Easter People

David Mowbray

David Mowbray was Vicar of All Saints from 1984 to 1991. Now retired (with Diana, his wife) to Lincoln, he continues to write words for congregations and choirs to sing. This article describes the background to his newly published book. Inspection copies are available and copies can be ordered from Dorothy Toyn (£10.00 plus postage).



If I have one special regret in life, it is that I never had piano lessons. If I have one blessing to count (and, truth to tell, I have many) it is that I joined the school choir. We led the singing at assembly (those were

the days, the golden days, "Jerusalem the golden"); we sang madrigals on Founder's Day; at school concerts we tackled Borodin, Handel and Parry. The trebles took part in one of the first concerts (Benjamin Britten's *Spring Symphony*) given in the newly-built Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. All this was privilege indeed and the laying of foundations of a lifelong love of music.

Another blessing is my early introduction to parish church worship (thanks to parental persuasion) and to the local boys' Crusader (nowadays curiously rebranded Urban Saints) Bible class. At these activities I made good friends and also learnt how interesting, not to say perplexing, the Bible often can be. At that time it was chiefly the Authorised Version (1611) which was in use, with its rolling, resonant sentences. And to this rich fare was added a range of hymns, many ancient and a handful modern.

I often hummed the tunes (discreetly) on the trolleybus coming home from school. Gradually I headed towards university,

theology and ordination - and the, to me, intriguing field of liturgy and the devising of Sunday services.

A decisive moment came early in 1977 when, at a mid-ministry course at Windsor I wrote two hymns which were sung in St. George's Chapel. From that point onwards the hymn plot thickened and this book is the fruit of that process.

I owe much to the encouragement of friends in the *Jubilate* group and to the staff of the music publishers, Stainer & Bell. I owe just as much, more perhaps, to my long-suffering family who have watched me silently scribbling on beaches, in shoe shops and in the vicarage kitchen.



I believe that our churches need hymns. In the first place, they direct us towards God. They teach us things and help us to remember things.

*Hymns do more than sermons can  
to justify the ways of God to man.*

That might sometimes be the case! I regard hymn books as prayer-books, something screens can never be. And I have found that to write hymns, whatever their quality, is itself an attempt to pray. Moreover, the existence of hymns is a witness to the validity of Christian faith. In the words of Fred Pratt Green, whose work as a contemporary hymn writer I greatly admire,

*So has the Church, in liturgy and song,  
in faith and love, through centuries of  
wrong,  
borne witness to the truth in every  
tongue.  
Alleluia!*