

O be joyful in the Lord all ye lands
serve the Lord with gladness,
and come before his presence with a song.
Be ye sure that the Lord he is God;
it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves,
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise,
be thankful unto him and speak good of his Name.
For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting
and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

Dear Friend

One of the psalms set for today's Morning Prayer is Psalm 100. This is often called the Jubilate after the first word in the Latin version of the psalm. It's a short psalm and so I've given the full version from the Psalter.

Wikipedia tells us that a psalter is a volume containing the Book of Psalms, often with other devotional material bound in as well, such as a liturgical calendar and litany of the Saints. Until the emergence of the book of hours in the Late Middle Ages, psalters were the books most widely owned by wealthy lay persons. They were commonly used for learning to read. Many Psalters were richly illuminated, and they include some of the most spectacular surviving examples of medieval book art.

Today, it's not a word often used outside church choirs. Those who sing will know it as the book used for singing the psalms at Matins and Evensong – Morning and Evening Prayer in the Book of Common Prayer – including the chant written for each psalm. The English translation of the psalms in the Psalter differs from other versions and so I've used that version here for all those who have sung this psalm for decades and will know them well. I don't think in this case the old words are any barrier to understanding the simple message this psalm wishes to convey.

It's a great sadness to almost all of us who go to church that we can't at present come before the Lord with a song! Last Sunday's service in church was wonderful after the stay-at-home services we have enjoyed since March. It was so good to come before the Lord as a small, but joyful, gathering of some of our regular congregation. We were lucky to have Michael Strange with us to give us some live music and we were able to hum along with the hymns on the screen. I know I am not alone in praying for more live music, not only in church, but elsewhere too. Keeping ourselves healthy in mind and body is important if we are to go out and love and serve the Lord. Singing is one of those activities which is good for both mind and body.

We do all have much to be thankful for and to praise the Lord for too. As I write the sun is shining on the trees and flowers outside and even through the double glazing I can hear the birds singing. We can see the glory of God's creation, not just ourselves, all around us.

And it is a joy to be here, now, to be able to give thanks to God for all he has given us. We can at least sing our song of joy to ourselves at home until such time as we can do it together in church.

Let us pray

O Christ, door of the sheepfold,
may we enter your gates with praise
and go from your courts to serve you
in the poor, the lost and the wandering,
this day and all our days. Amen