



# SEASON OF CREATION

SEPTEMBER 1- OCTOBER 4



**A Selection of recent hymns on eco themes, with notes from the writer: from Rev'd Professor June Boyce-Tillman. Professor of Applied music at the University of Winchester and a priest in the Church of England. Presented with gratitude from EcoCongregation Scotland**

## Section 1: Well-known metrical tunes

### **Deep in my heart, despair is crying out**

[Tune: Abide with me ] 10 10 10 10

1. Deep in my heart, despair is crying out.  
Where is the one who hears that desperate shout?  
I have used up my creativity.  
In life, in death, will You abide in me?

2. Deep in the soil abides the world's rebirth;  
Worms, beetles, ants turn rubbish into earth,  
Richly sustaining roots of flower and tree;  
In dirt and dark abides divinity.

3. Come not in terrors, as the King of kings;  
But kind and good, with healing in Your wings:  
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea;  
Warm friend, show how you still abide with me.

4. Deep in our souls lies wounding that still lasts,  
Anger and guilt surviving from our past;  
Caverns of Wisdom in captivity  
Yield gleaming gold as You abide in me.

June Boyce-Tillman August 2021 in Brixham where **Abide with me** was written

## **Alleluia! Christ is singing;**

Tune: Hyfrydol 8.7.8.7 D

1. Alleluia! Christ is singing;  
Jewelled sounding, sparkling health.  
Alleluia! All is blooming  
Overcoming winter's death.  
Hark! The songs of peaceful music  
Echo round the universe:  
"Love is birthing, see the rising  
Feel it spreading round the earth."

2. Alleluia! Christ companion  
Is within our sorrow now;  
Alleluia! Love is near us;  
Trust believes, nor questions how.  
Though our vision can be clouded

When a dying feel draws near,  
 Through the complex strands of weaving  
 Love is searching in our fear.

3. Alleluia! Soily foodstuffs,  
 Nurture us each living day;  
 Alleluia! Here together  
 We find greening on our way.  
 Jesus Wisdom, Christ Sophia,  
 Makes us one community,  
 As the songs of earth and heaven  
 Sweep across this billowing sea.

June Boyce-Tillman April 2023

## ***Golden Sheaves***

87 87 D To the tune *Golden sheaves* by Arthur Sullivan (1942-1900)  
**For Sarah 's ordination to the priesthood**

1. To thee, O Lord, our hearts we raise  
 In hymns of adoration;  
 To thee bring crafted songs of praise  
 With shouts of exultation.  
 Bright robes of gold the fields adorn;  
 The hills with joy are ringing;  
 The valleys stand so thick with corn  
 That even they are singing.

2. We gaze into Your fertile earth  
 And see Your creatures working –  
 Regeneration in the dirt,  
 The Holy Spirit birthing.  
 The soil is the human ground –  
 Society's foundation,  
 The dark of God, a fire profound,  
 The basis of creation.

3. We long for right relationship,  
 Enfleshed in earthy greening,  
 With animals and shining fish  
 Enlightening and dark'ning.  
 Compassion lives within our hearts  
 For peace and justice searching -  
 Requiring all Your skilful arts  
 For heavening and earthing

4. And now, on this our festal day,  
 Thy bounteous hand confessing,  
 Upon thine altar, Lord, we lay  
 The first-fruits of thy blessing;  
 By thee, our souls are being fed  
 With gifts of grace supernal;  
 From fertile fields comes daily bread,  
 Our route to bread eternal.

To the tune *Golden sheaves* by Arthur Sullivan (1942-1900)

Words by June Boyce-Tillman based on the original by William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898). Verses 1 and 4 are adapted by June Boyce-Tillman from his original. Verses 2 and 3 are by June Boyce-Tillman and based on The Rev Dr Terry Biddington's *Dirty Theology*. The whole is written for my dear friend Sarah and reflects her love of tradition and innovation and reflected in it are aspects of her life. She often films in her garden for which she has a deep love and admitted at one time to watching worms at work there. Jeeves, her priestly cat, who features regularly in morning and evening prayer, is included in the animals in verse 3. Sarah's role regularly demands balancing compassion and justice and we have had many conversations about heavenly and earthly justice.

## A DIRTY HYMN

to the TUNE *Jesu, Lover of my soul*

1. Sing a song of whirling worms,  
     Deep within a mudsoaked soil,  
     Wellspring of our verdancy,  
     Processing with endless toil.
  
2. Tell your stories, crawling ones,

Circling round the roots and rocks;  
 As you green the land above  
 Hidden Wisdom is unlocked.

3. Ancient healing cavern pools,  
 Underworld of dust and dark,  
 Turn detritus into gold -  
 Substance of the bear and lark.

4. In the tunnelling of God's grace  
 We are rooted deep in earth,  
 Smear is with your dirt and grit  
 For in darkening God gives birth.

June Boyce-Tillman May 2021

## Millennium Hymn

This hymn encompasses the thinking that underpins my book *Constructing Musical Healing – The Wounds that Sing*. It concerns the need for balance in our own lives and our theology and was first tried out with Myra Poole SND. The tune is entitled *Hildegard* and was first sung to Michael Finnissey whose encouragement has been so important to me. In its choral version it was first sung on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1998 in St. Mary de Haura, New Shoreham (West Sussex) by Philip Adam's choir.

1. God of justice, wind the circle,  
 Making all the cosmos one,  
 Show us in millennial visions,  
 How on earth Your will is done;  
 Help us see the mercy flowing  
 From the wounding of Christ's side;  
 Heal us with compassion spreading  
 As a purifying tide.

2. God of dreams and intuition  
 Inspiration from the night,  
 Temper reason's rigid systems  
 With the leap of faith's insight.  
 God of passion, fill our knowing  
 With Divine authority  
 And a sense of mystery leading  
 To a right humility.
  
3. God of faith's heroic journey,  
 May Your Truth direct our way;  
 Guide our footsteps, give us courage  
 In the challenge of each day.  
 God of Wisdom's spinning spiral,  
 Soothe us with your gentle charms,  
 Weave our lives into the pattern  
 Of Christ's all-embracing arms.
  
4. God of order, God of chaos,  
 In love's creativity  
 Move the mountains of tradition  
 Stifling earth's fertility;  
 Break the barriers, guide the learning,  
 Bind the wounds and heal the pain  
 Bring to birth our human yearning  
 Integrate the world again.

## **In the earth, the warmth, the water**

**Meter:** 8.7.8.7 ALL FOR JESUS by Stainer

1. In the earth, the warmth, the water,  
 Airy blessing from the sky,  
 Flowers wake up and blossoms spring up  
 Bringing us both power and life.

2. Awe and wonder and thanksgiving

For such holy sacred gifts  
 Mirror Love's divine creating  
 As the fertile Spirit lifts.

3. We surrender to that loving  
 Glistening through this sacred place;  
 When we look into its deepening  
 We behold God's awesome face.

June Boyce-Tillman April 2023

## **Alleluia, Christ is rising**

**Meter:** 8.7.8.7

1. Alleluia! Christ is rising,  
 Deep within the fertile earth;  
 Worms and beetles, dark bacteria  
 Bring our Christic life to birth.  
 Alleluia! We are rising  
 In ensoiled community.  
 Alleluia! Wisdom calls us  
 To inclusive unity.
  
2. Alleluia! Alleluias  
 Make the links that jump between  
 Hoards of microscopic creatures  
 In the taproots of our trees.  
 Alleluia, alleluia!  
 We are rising in the green  
 Christ, the source of all creation,  
 Leaps within the darkening.
  
3. Alleluia, Easter shows us  
 Earth and heaven intertwine,  
 Endlessly in love revealing

How the earthy is Divine.  
 Alleluia, Christ is living  
 In the fruiting of the vine.  
 Golden harvest, dirty rooting  
 Brought to us in bread and wine.

June Boyce-Tillman April 2023

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## **Section 2: Songs with their own tunes**

SONGS WITH THEIR OWN TUNES (in Boyce-Tillman, June (2006). *A Rainbow to Heaven – Hymns, Songs and Chants*. London: Stainer and Bell.

### **Sacred Endings and beginnings**

This song was written in December 1996 at Holyrood House, Thirsk run by Elizabeth and Stanley Baxter. The opening was inspired by Benjamin Britten's *New Year Carol*. Like many of my pieces it uses the four elements as seminal images for the theology.

1. Come sparkling water in celebration of a New Year  
 To cleanse our deep wounds and purify our lives  
 Wash away, wash away  
 All that prevents us reaching full maturity.  
 Celebrate, celebrate sacred endings and beginnings.
  
2. Come, fertile good earth in celebration of a New Year  
 To keep us grounded in God's security.  
 Form our roots, form our roots  
 That we may firmly stand in all adversity  
 Celebrate, celebrate sacred endings and beginnings
  
3. Come shining candles in celebration of a New Year  
 To burn our cold hearts and make them warm with love.  
 Pierce our eyes, pierce our eyes  
 That we may see again the wonders of God's world



Celebrate, celebrate sacred endings and beginnings

4. Come flowing pure air in celebration of a New Year  
 To fill our bodies with consecrated health.  
 Set us free, set us free,  
 That we may breathe again the airy Spirit's pow'r,  
 Celebrate, celebrate sacred endings and beginnings.

### 16. God the Artist

This song was written at St Mary's Abbey, West Malling in January 1991 for the Rev. Marian Carter who has provided me with such warm friendship and hospitality. It was the theme song for her Rainbow People holiday project (now published by the National Christian Education Council). It was sung by the children of the Church of St Mark, Kempshott with Hatch Warren, Basingstoke at her ordination as deacon on March 29<sup>th</sup> 1992. It was refreshing to see them leaping and dancing during the choruses.

1. I want to make a rainbow  
 And paint it with my love,  
 But first I'll make the paintbox,  
 Link earth with heaven above.  
 I'll start off with the dark end  
 And move towards the light,  
 Then blend them all together  
 To make a light that's white.

CHORUS:

*We're riding on a rainbow,  
 We're riding on a rainbow,  
 We're riding on a rainbow  
 That tells us of God's love.*

2. So first I'll make the violet  
 By touching purple shoots;  
 The indigo will take longer;  
 I'll need some deep, dark roots;  
 The green will not be too hard;  
 Just wait still spring begins;  
 For blue I'll need some water  
 And flashing fishy fins.

## CHORUS

3. The yellow lies on the seashore  
 And glows in summer sun;  
 The oranges have ripened  
 Now Autumn has begun  
 The red I'll find in winter  
 In berries on the tree.  
 Now all my paints are ready,  
 A miracle you'll see.

## CHORUS

4. For there's another canvas  
 That isn't in the sky,  
 A space in ev'ry person,  
 A heart where tears can cry,  
 A place where joy can spring up  
 Like sunshine after rain,  
 A gentle creamy paper,  
 Where I can paint again.

## CHORUS

5. I'll use the same old colours,  
 With which I paint the sky,  
 Remind them of the promise  
 I made in years gone by,  
 Recall in them my loving,  
 My caring for my world,  
 Each time they see the rainbow  
 Across the earth unfurled.

## CHORUS

CHORUS II: *We're sliding down a rainbow....*

CHORUS III: *We're jumping over a rainbow...*

### 17. Walk softly

This is a simple chant taken from the words of the theologian Chung Hyun Kyung, whom I met at the women's festival in Harare, Zimbabwe in November 1998, where she performed a healing ritual after a moving session on the abuse of women.

Walk softly on the earth,  
 Massage it with your feet,  
 Because when you are walking,  
 You walk on your mother's face.

### 18. Song of the Earth

This song was written in May 1996 and dedicated to Veronica Seddon. It was used in her garden for a liturgy when the theologian, Rosemary Ruether–Radford visited. It is strong song that benefits from a drum accompaniment and has been used in this way in liturgies in the New Forest led by Chris and Isabel Clarke. It encompasses many of my deepest beliefs about the nature of music and its relationship to the earth.

CHORUS:

*Sing us our own song the song of the earth,  
 The song of creation, the song of our birth,  
 That exists in belonging to you and to me,  
 To the stars and the mountains, the sky and the sea.*

1. Listen! You're hearing the song of the earth,  
 They sing it who know of their value and worth,  
 For they know they belong with the sea and the sky,  
 To the moonshine at midnight, the clouds floating by.

CHORUS

2. It is not one song but patchworks of sound.  
 That includes all the pitches that people have found  
 That includes the vibrations of earthquakes and bees  
 Of the laughing fire's crackling and murmuring bees.

CHORUS

3. All blend together to make the earth song,  
Fragmented parts separated too long,  
True notes and rhythms and colours and beat  
Make sacred spaces where we all meet.

## CHORUS

### **JUSTICE as RIGHT RELATION**

LUX EOI by SULLIVAN

1. Within th' encircling planets God's Spirit gently flows,  
Restoring right connection through which creation grows;  
With subtle understanding God takes each tiny part  
And makes them fit together within a wounded heart.  
We pray you, vibrant Spirit, infuse our hearts today  
That we may act within You and understand Your Way.
2. The joy of right relationship the cosmos can inbreathe,  
As You encircle all things and lovingly re-weave  
The strands of human living. The joy, disputes and pain  
Are taken and re-woven to make life flow again;  
And we are called to do Your work and make the weaving fair,  
Reflect Your deep transforming love infusing all our care.
3. Our human institutions, our politics, our wealth  
Bear fruit in justice-making to serve a nation's health;  
The difficult decisions – to nurture and control –  
The maintenance of order and all that is involved

Take place within Your Wisdom still making all things new;  
 We ask that Your amazing grace will fill all we pursue.

June Boyce-Tillman March 19<sup>th</sup> 2007.

To write a hymn for a formal public service is not easy. While such gatherings are comfortable with singing texts in archaic language, the danger with contemporary language is that one might be asking people to sing what they do not believe in a language that they do understand. When the High Sheriff asked me to write this hymn I had to address this problem.

For such a service I needed to find a well known tune to write for and preferably (from my own point of view) one that I had not written words for before. In the end I decided on THAXTED by Gustav Holst, originally the main tune for Jupiter from the Planets Suite. This is well known for the words 'I vow to thee my country'. These words are loved by many and viewed as problematic by many others. When using a hymn tune the well known words will always shine through the new text in people's minds; so often I try to make the new words a commentary or dialogue with the old ones.

The service itself was concerned with justice and justice making. Dr Carolyn Boulter – the High Sheriff - has worked in research in science education for much of her professional life and so I wanted to include that aspect in the text. I decided on the image of God the Weaver. This is an image found widely in contemporary theology associated with the continual action of God in the making and remaking of the cosmos and draws on a strand of theology called Wisdom theology. It also draws on my research into the 12<sup>th</sup> century theologian Hildegard of Bingen who saw God as having created everything in right relationship and creation growing and flourishing when it is in right relation. The first verse then sets out this image of God weaving and reweaving the tapestry and paying particular attention to where it is torn or cut – the woundedness of creation. It also contains reference to the original source of the tune – The Planets Suite.

As I considered the role of the structures that control justice in our society I considered that the weaving image was extremely useful. The police and the courts in general deal with those areas where relationship has broken down and the fabric of creation is wounded. In that sense they are called to be co-weavers with God in the areas of the woundedness of creation. The line in the middle of verse two with a

full stop in the middle shows how the lines here are rewoven as they do not coincide with the musical phrases.

The last verse deals with the difficulty of making the right decisions in this process of restoring right relationship – in particular whether the people need nurturing or controlling and how far these two functions interact with one another. But it ends with the essential nature of this work if a nation is to remain healthy and flourishing and a prayer that we use discernment in our decisions to be partners in this action which is at the heart of the universe.

The exciting thing about being in the service and meeting people after they had sung the hymn was to be able to engage in dialogue about Wisdom theology with them. Although these ideas are regularly discussed in theological circles it is unlikely that many of the people present would be familiar with such debates. When I started writing hymns 25 years ago, I saw part of my role as to make contemporary developments in theology available to a wider audience. I am extremely grateful to Carol for making this possible in this service.

June Boyce-Tillman October 2008