

## Cornerstone (My hope is built on nothing less)

Jonas Myrin, Reuben Morgan & Eric Liljero with verses from 'The Solid Rock' by Edward Mote (1797-1874)

The words of the verses of this song will perhaps be known already, having featured widely in hymnbooks set to at least eight different tunes since an edited version of Edwin Mote's original text was published c. 1878. However, so far as can be determined, it has not appeared in an authorised British Methodist collection. The version which features in the CCLI Top 100 is a representative of the 'retuned hymns' movement, in which older texts are given a new tune in the contemporary Christian music genre, and sometimes a chorus is added. In this case, Mote's original chorus has been replaced. [In an interview, co-author Eric Liljero](#) explained that this new setting was written in Stockholm Cathedral the day after the 2011 Norway terror attacks.

This genre and tempo give the words more space to breathe and encourage reflection. A new tune to an old text can be challenging but may draw out new meaning. For those introducing the song for the first time, here are a few points to help us sing together.

### Hear it here

Hillsong studio album version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lluUDnFicy8>

Austin Stone Community Church version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gv5AaabOXU4>

Worship Together interview with co-author

Jonas Myrin, plus an acoustic version with advice on guitar patterns:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP0EmlzswQM>

### Scores

Various online download sources, including the Hillsong album version. Popular book versions include.

- *Mission Praise* 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, #1334
  - *Piano accompaniment version incorporating the full introduction. Needs a strong vocal or solo instrument lead.*
- *Songs of Fellowship* Vol. 6, #2976
  - *Tune incorporated into the piano line. More useful for those with limited resources.*

### Introduction

The Hillsong recording features a memorable introduction and turnaround, perhaps evocative of the rain battering down during the storm, within which the calmer character of the verse/chorus symbolise divine protection. While it is true that we can become accustomed to an introduction not stating any part of the melody that follows (e.g. 'Jerusalem'), for congregations whose primary diet is the four-part organ-led hymn introduced by a playover of selected bars plus a few beats of silence, this may be unexpected. Some will find it unsettling, and this subtly works against the uniting intentions of congregational song. Options could be:

- Omit it ... at least for the first few singings, in favour of a playover of the verse, especially if there is no vocal lead of any kind.
- But ... be aware that for those who use a commercial recording of this song in their personal worship the introduction may have become an indispensable part of their 'experience' of the song. So, retain it, and a lead singer or accompanist could cue in the congregation, either with an encouraging glance and obvious intake of breath, or verbally. With the latter, ensure that the word 'hope' falls on the fourth beat of the last bar of introduction. Earlier than that is little help; later,

and the congregation's entry will be overlapped and inhibited (it takes some practice to place it naturally):

*Introduction (last 2 bars shown)* *Verse*

F G no rall. C

1 2 3 4 1. My hope is built on

Example 2: Cue the congregation Leader: "My hope"

- Alternatively, you could insert a bar (or two) of a C chord with a gentle repetitive movement to signal the time to sing is near. This is a good bridge between the previous option and traditional techniques. Listen to the Austin Stone recording (link above) for an example. This adaptation still benefits from a visual or vocal cue.

**Range** ✓✓ (congregational with minor adaptation)

Voice

← highest (x1)  
← lowest (x12)

Example 1: Congregational range

Usually printed in the key of C and as such has a range which is congregational, if somewhat on the low side; although this helps to express its message of grounded assurance. As recorded (and sometimes printed), the melody of the repeated last line of verse two, and also the second and third choruses, jumps up an octave (as per the Worship Together recording); an arranger's technique to build passion and excitement. Don't expect the congregation to follow, as the highest point (\*) is well outside their range. Even if your lead singers or choir can reach this, discretion is advised, especially with a smaller gathering.

**Regularity** ✓✓ (almost entirely regular)

The verses are of identical metre and match the traditional public domain version with a couple of small exceptions. Relevant here is that Mote's final verse concludes 'faultless to stand before the throne'. The Hillsong text omits the word 'to', which tends to derail singers. You may wish to restore it.

**Syncopation** ✓✓ (occasional)

The final two syllables of each verse can be difficult to place accurately as originally recorded by Hillsong. The Austin Stone version tends towards something rhythmically simpler.

F G C

but whol - ly trust in Je - sus' name.

Example 3: Possible simplified rhythm at end of verses

**Song set medley options**

Songs that could flow well from this song, or lead into it:

- Similar themes:
  - o *Jesus, lover of my soul*, Charles Wesley (StF 355)
- Similar themes and tempo:
  - o *Even though I walk through the valley*, Matt & Beth Redman (StF 626)
  - o *Lord, I come before your throne of grace*, Robert & Dawn Critchley (StF 58)