

GENESIS



Singing the Faith+ Resources

The hymn suggestions in this resource reflect the focus of Bible Month 2024 on the Book of Genesis. We hope they will be helpful if you are planning worship alongside Bible studies and discussions during this month. (Or at any time you wish to return to one or other of the stories or characters that dominate these foundational chapters of Scripture.)

The starter list of hymns, mostly from Singing the Faith and **StF+** but not entirely, parallels the stories and themes of each of the four weeks in the study guide, [*A Month with the Book of Genesis.*](#)

A great number of the hymns suggested assume the continuation of God's story of salvation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. For the human struggles, hopes and concerns that Jesus engaged with, and which the New Testament addresses, are found front and centre in the lives of God's first co-workers and pioneers, from the Garden of Eden to the bread basket of Egypt. As we sing, we are also firmly reminded that throughout the arc of Scripture, Yahweh, the God of Creation remains constant, forever the great *I AM* of Revelation.



Introduction

An Invitation to the book of Genesis

To respond to what Debra Reid calls 'the Genesis invitation' means necessarily to engage in an intentional way with God's created world. Reid says that *'our existence and lives only find meaning when we take our places in the story of God and humanity working together in the world God set in motion and continues to create and sustain'*. The other side of that coin is when, as Helen Paynter says in 'Reflections on the Flood', we turn our backs on the invitation to support the work of creating and sustaining, and instead allow the world's ruin and humanity's destruction.

Setting the Story in Context

Into a world of dark, waste and disordered space (StF 387) Ann Phillips uses direct, accessible phrases to describe how God creates 'a pattern of new life' out of chaos

Before the world began, one Word was there (StF 101) Underlines divine pre-existence 'rooted in care'. Another way of putting that is:

God is Love: let heaven adore him (StF 103) And don't underestimate the key lesson being expressed by Cecil Frances Alexander in ~

All things bright and beautiful (StF 100) – that God Almighty is great and 'has made all things well'

To explore our ongoing relationship with creation, and our tendency to fail the world in our care, there are few better places to start than:

Touch the Earth lightly (StF 729) by Shirley Erena Murray.

(Also see StF's introduction to singing about [Fragile Earth](#). Its related article, [Fragile Earth – experiencing God in the desert](#), points to other hymns that speak to our experience of pain, loss and fear in a world that doesn't always behave as we might wish God's creation would.)

But there is hope. It is expressed in the story arc from creation to Revelation in which 'God is continually generating newness'. This was also explored in the 2023 Bible Month focus on The Book of Revelation, and can be sung in such hymns as:



God, beyond our dreams, you have stirred in us a memory* (StF 496)

Praise to the God who clears the way (StF 183)

The God who sings a new world into being (StF 714)

There is a new heaven; there is a new earth (StF 738) by Ruth Duck is hymn-partner to ~ ***God, who made the stars of heaven*** (StF 7), a text inspired by Genesis: *You have formed a servant people // led us by your hand. Light of nations, shine in us // brighten every land.*

Week 1

The Sovereign God who Creates

This first week of studying Genesis echoes and extends key starting points highlighted in the study guide introduction. God's sovereignty is the context for all that follows, together with the invitation for humanity to partner with God. There is no coercion implied by the invitation; God respects human autonomy.

Adam and Eve are God's original 'image bearers' and '*they begin a pattern of responding to God that becomes the blueprint for all humanity*', writes Debra Reid. When a fracturing occurs between the creator and created, '*the co-operative potential at the heart of creation's purpose is broken*'. Nevertheless, as Reid puts it: '*The fact that things go wrong doesn't mean God's purposes cannot be upheld.*'

Arthur Ainger's 1894 hymn focusses on Christian mission, but his words are pertinent as we consider what inspired Yahweh's great creative enterprise:

*God is working his purpose out,
as year succeeds to year. . .
nearer and nearer draws the time,
the time that shall surely be:
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.*

In Partnership with God



Community of Christ, who make the Cross your own (StF 681)

God eternal, timeless moment ([website only](#))

God is working his purposes out (Hymns & Psalms 769)

I sing the almighty power of God (StF 107)

Lord of creation, to you be all praise! (StF 449)

The world God imagines ([website only](#))

There is no moment of my life (StF 482) – paraphrasing Psalm 139

You know all about it, Lord ([website only](#)) – a contemporary paraphrase of Psalm 139 by Matthew Lovlie. The complete psalm is also laid out in responsive form at StF 835



Week 1

The Sovereign God who Creates (Continued)

As God's Image Bearers



*God, beyond our dreams, you have stirred in us a memory** (StF 496)

*Great God, your love has called us here** (StF 499)

In the beginning God played with the planets (StF 108) esp. v.3

Thou God of truth and love (StF 620) – Charles Wesley's love poem transformed

Partnerships Fractured



Best of all is God is with us (StF 610)

Father, we have sinned in word, and deed, and thought (StF 422)

God, how can we forgive when bonds of love are torn? (StF 613)

We lay our broken world in sorrow at your feet (StF 718)

When love is found and hope comes home (StF 607) – a wedding hymn that speaks to the relationship between Adam and Eve, and between them and their creator





Week 2

The God who Calls and Blesses

Surprisingly few hymns directly reflect the narrative of the ancient patriarchs as they unfold in Genesis. Brian Wren's *Deep in the shadows of the past* (StF 463) is one of the few in *Singing the Faith*: 'far out from settled lands, some nomads travelled with their God across the desert sands'. For the most part, we sing of God at, and before, the Creation, then jump to the stories of the exodus from Egypt and its aftermath, and their theological ramifications through the New Testament.

Moreover, much of our sung worship relating to the Creation and the stories of Genesis places God at a distance: 'The God of Abraham praise,' we sing, 'who reigns enthroned above' (StF 91). In his ground-breaking 1989 book *What Language Shall I Borrow?*, Wren argues that the way we have traditionally sung of God has been characterised predominantly by images drawn from authoritarian, dominant and patriarchal human experiences.[1] They create an impression of God that isn't a million miles away from the barely approachable, bearded, ancient man of popular imagination.

Contrasting with that sense of a divine being directing events from a place of enthronement, what Debra Reid helps us understand, as we read about Abraham, Sarah and their descendants, is God's personal investment in human endeavours; divine closeness to the action. She says that God chooses Israel 'to be his work partner', and Abraham is the first representative of this great endeavour.

In the invitation to partnership, demanding challenges will be balanced by grace-filled blessing; seen in the call for Abraham to travel, literally, out of his comfort zone, and in the promise of a new homeland and descendants as numerous as the stars. It will be a wandering existence with many ups and downs, in which trusting relationships of all kinds will be tested (the almost-sacrifice of Isaac is just one example). The failings of Abraham and his family are never far from view, and yet, like the stars themselves, Abraham's people will become a light shining out God's presence worldwide.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Brian Wren, *What Language Shall I Borrow? God-Talk in Worship: A male response to Feminist Theology* (1989: Crossroad Publishing Company, New York) p.119 ff. By analysing the 1982 Methodist hymn book *Hymns and Psalms*, Brian identified as the dominant metaphor system in our singing what he summarised as 'KINGAFAP', short for 'King-G-d-Almighty-Father-Protector'.



Week 2

The God who Calls and Blesses (Continued)

Calling



A charge to keep I have (StF 658)

Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world (StF 462)

God it was who said to Abraham (StF 464)

God who sets us on a journey (website only)

Deep in the darkness a starlight is gleaming (StF 625)

Deep in the shadows of the past (StF 463)

Lord, you have my heart and I will search for yours (StF 559)

The God of Abraham praise (StF 91)

I, the Lord of sea and sky (StF 663) – a hymn referencing the Exodus and desert wanderings, but underlining God's continuing question: 'Whom shall I send?'

Blessing



Be still and know that I am God, and there is none beside me (StF 19)

Come, thou fount of every blessing (StF 494)

Fear not, for I am with you* (website only)

God will make a way where there is no way* (website only)

May the Sending One sing in you (StF 472)

Through the love of God our Saviour (StF 639)

We turn to God when we are sorely pressed (StF 640)

When circumstances make my life too hard to understand (StF 641)

Trust



In the darkness of the still night (StF 109)

When, O God, our faith is tested (StF 643)

I lift my eyes up to the mountains (StF 631) – paraphrasing Psalm 121. The complete psalm is also laid out in responsive form at (StF 830)



Week 3

The God who Comes to People in their Struggle

Continuing the idea of partnership and co-working seen both in Eden and the call of Abraham, we come to Abraham's grandson, Jacob. Jacob becomes God's co-worker despite himself. These chapters of Genesis offer a biography of a man transformed. As Debra Reid says, Jacob is introduced to us as *'a scheming cheat'*; but his human failings *'are met by God's transformative presence and grace'* – as a result of which, Jacob's awareness *'of God's character and sufficiency increases'*.

Reid pinpoints three incidents in Jacob's life that illustrate his growing understanding of God's engagement with the people of Abraham:

- his deception of his brother Esau and father Isaac ([Genesis 26: 34 – 27: 45](#))
- his encounter with God, who is loyal to Jacob and unwavering in his plans, in a dream at Bethel ([Genesis 28: 10 – 22](#))
- Jacob's wrestling match with a mysterious, human-divine person, during which he believes he has seen God face to face ([Genesis: 32: 22 – 30](#))

Across this life, from opportunistic younger brother to vulnerable elder statesman, God makes of Jacob a worthy pioneer in God's purposes. As the poet George Herbert has it:

*All may of thee partake:
nothing can be so mean,
which with this tincture, 'For thy sake',
will not grow bright and clean.*

(StF 668).





Week 3

The God who Comes to People in their Struggle (Continued)

Recruited with all his flaws



Everyone needs compassion, love that's never failing (StF 627)

Just as I am (StF 556)

Teach me, my God and King (StF 668)

The King of love my shepherd is (StF 479) esp v.3

Take, oh take me as I am (StF 781) - a short song, suitable for interweaving with spoken prayers

When I have failed / Come, Holy Breath – two versions of the same text by Brian Wren

- *New Beginnings* (1993: Hope Publishing, Carol Stream, Il.) #30 & #31
- *Piece Together Praise: a theological journey* (1996: Stainer & Bell, London) #191 & #82

Encounter at Bethel



Abide with me (StF 141)

Faithful One, so unchanging (StF 628) – cf. *Psalm 62

God of all power, and truth, and grace (StF 498)

God of my faith, I offer you my doubt (StF 629)

Now I have found the ground wherein sure my soul's anchor may remain (StF 561)

You showed us mercy when we were in darkness (StF 488)

Wrestling with a Mystery



Amazing grace - how sweet the sound (StF 440)

Author of faith, eternal Word (StF 457)



Week 4

The God who Confirms & Safeguards Divine Promises

There is a high degree of dysfunctionality within the relationships of Jacob's family. That Joseph survives the trauma inflicted on him by his brothers to become Egypt's most respected civil servant is a miracle only to be explained by the patient designs of God and Joseph's belief that he can play a key role in them. *'You intended to harm me,'* he tells his brothers in Egypt, *'but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being achieved, the saving of many lives.'* ([Genesis 50: 20](#))

Along the way, people are hurt and trust is broken – not least in the life of Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law ([chapter 38](#)). Yet, as Debra Reid emphasises, the main focus of these chapters is on God's work not only to restore goodness to his divine dream, but *'to bring hope for the fallen world thorough a chosen family line'*; even when the world and everything in it appears to have gone terribly awry. God is in the business of creating new beginnings and bringing hope – the same business that we see embodied in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.





Week 4

The God who Confirms & Safeguards Divine Promises (Continued)

In God Alone



Adonai (*website only*)

Fear not, for I am with you (*website only*)

Great is thy faithfulness (StF 51)

Have faith in God, my heart (StF 466)

Heal us, Immanuel! Hear our prayer* (StF 650)

I know that my Redeemer lives, and ever prays for me (StF 502)

In heavenly love abiding (StF 736)

May the mind of Christ my Saviour (StF 504)

My soul finds rest in God alone (StF 633) – paraphrasing *Psalm 62

O God, your constant care and love by H. Glen Laine, 1976 e.g. Common Praise #517

O Lord, we are always in your presence (StF 33)

Through all the changing scenes of life (StF 638)

When Human Relationships are Broken



God, how can we forgive when bonds of love are torn? (StF 613)

God! When human bonds are broken (StF 649)

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world (StF 767)

When the bonds of love are breaking (StF 656)

God has been Present



All my hope on God is founded (StF 455)

And are we yet alive, and see each other's face? (StF 456)

Give me the wings of faith to rise within the veil (StF 747)

God will make a way where there is no way* (*website only*)

Great God, your love has called us here* (StF 499)

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided (StF 470)

Neither death, nor life (StF 474)

Through the love of God our Saviour (StF 639)