

Walking with Micah. . . as allies

What hymns can tell us

The idea of being allies to those in need relates closely to the theme of [Walking with Micah. . . as examples](#). Perhaps, however, the word “ally” adds a helpful nuance to *how* we act as Micah-inspired examples, not least in the implied possibility of give and take, mutuality and personal growth.

The term “allies” is commonly applied to individuals and communities who stand alongside/advocate for members of the LGBTQ+ communities, while not themselves identifying as LGBTQ+. It is also used in relation living alongside the chronically ill. One online article shares the insights of a number of chronically ill individuals, who describe allies in terms of empathy (“putting the needs of a chronically ill person first”) and “trust, community, advocacy, self-reflection, and change”.*

These are characteristics – qualities, even – that we may apply to seeking justice, the fair distribution of resources, and support for those whose safety nets have been removed. Dave Bankhead et al. are explicit about this: “I will speak out for those who have no voices. . . I will speak out for those who have no choices; I will cry out for those who live without love. . .” ([StF 702](#)). The examples of Jesus standing by a woman “caught in adultery” ([John 8: 2-11](#)) and Yahweh standing by Hagar and Ishmael, banished to the desert ([Genesis 21: 8-20](#))** both show how God cuts through complex social and family assumptions.

Giving and receiving

Embedded within the term “ally”, there is also the requirement to invest: both in long-term relationships and through practical engagement. Both aspects inform the story of Ruth and Boaz ([explored as part of the Bible Month focus on the book of Ruth in 2020](#)) and are reflected in Richard Gillard’s popular hymn, [Brother, sister, let me serve you](#) (StF 611). Both Gillard and Michael Forster ([Let love be real, in giving and receiving](#), StF 615) also highlight the mutuality of being an ally, receiving as well as the giving. Forster’s refrain reads:

As God loves us, so let us love each other:
with no demands, just open hands and space to grow.

We don’t always get this right. It is hard to be a consistent ally ([Before I take the body of my Lord](#), StF 575). As Andrew Pratt puts it in his challenging text, [If we claim to love our neighbour](#) (StF+):

Love of neighbour is not easy,
cuts us till we feel the pain,
sharing hurt that they are feeling
till they find new life again.

Nevertheless, one of [Rachel Lampard's top tips](#) for maintaining our commitment to change and justice is to “stay authentic”. She says that for campaigners, in particular, the act of volunteering or working alongside those we are campaigning for is important in order to ensure what we’re talking about matches lived experience. Tim Hughes encapsulates this in [God of justice, Saviour to all](#) (StF 699):

Stepping forward,
keep us from just singing,
move us into action,
we must go.

(In verse 2 of this hymn, Hughes also paraphrases [Micah 6: 8](#).)

Standing with Christ

Finally, but critically, Marnie Barrell reminds us that, as Christian disciples, being an ally works in more than one direction: “we stand with Christ” as well as those who need our help ([We do not hope to ease our minds](#), StF 717). St Paul reminds us ([1 Corinthians 12](#)) that the Christian community is Christ’s body in the here and now, assisting as we are able with God’s work.

“Christ has no body now but yours”, wrote St Teresa of Avila. “No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

*[How to be a chronic illness ally](#) (medtruth.com)

**In his article for Patheos, [“Jesus and Marginalized Communities”](#), Herb Montgomery refers to the use of Hagar’s story by womanist theologian Delores Williams: she argues that “‘God’s activity’ is not always liberation. There are times when, as in the case of Hagar, God provides a way of survival in exploitative situations.”