

Singing the Faith Plus Criteria for hymn submissions (revised 2021)

TERMS OF PUBLICATION

Hymns that are accepted for publication will be placed on the site for three years, after which they will be considered for renewal for a further agreed period.

Special arrangements are in place for submissions that are considered to be event-specific. See below.

All hymns published on Singing the Faith Plus are published on the understanding that they can be used freely by site-users, with any copyright information printed as appropriate. If an author or composer is listed with CCLI, the hymn should be included under regular reporting requirements. To check if an author or composer is registered with CCLI, refer to CCL and MRL Authorised Catalogue Lists. These are available online at: churches.uk.ccli.com/resources/authorised

INTRODUCTION

Singing the Faith Plus (StF+) aims to complement the printed Methodist hymn book by publishing new and fresh material for use in worship. We are looking for words and music that both echo and also speak to the modern world. We hope to reflect the experience of different cultures and perspectives within Methodism and wider society, both in the submissions we publish and in the range of contributors represented. (See Words and/or music reflects an aspect of contemporary human experiences.)

StF+ welcomes worship music of all styles, including traditional, metered hymns; worship songs appropriate for accompaniment by praise bands or guitars; and short pieces that can be used e.g. as prayer responses.

We are looking for material that is direct, honest, accessible and clear, but also imaginative, thoughtful, challenging and creative. The word “hymn” below refers to all texts designed to be sung in worship.

Before you submit your hymn, take a moment to assess it against the following criteria checklist. If helpful, also see the more detailed explanations of the criteria below.

We don't ask that each requirement is addressed in every hymn, but submissions that reflect these points are more likely to be considered.

CHECKLIST

<u>Language is inclusive</u>
<u>Words are appropriate theologically to Methodist beliefs and values</u>
<u>Words and/or music reflects an aspect of contemporary human experiences</u>
<u>Language is contemporary and accessible</u>
<u>Meter is regular and the rhythmic stress consistent [for traditional verse hymns]</u>
<u>Text and/or music style complements material included in Singing the Faith and on Singing the Faith Plus</u>
<u>Material has not been published elsewhere</u>

You may also find it useful to read the Preface to *Singing the Faith*, and [three thoughts on hymn writing](#) by the prolific writer, Martin Leckebusch.

CRITERIA IN MORE DETAIL

Language is inclusive

The 2009 Methodist Conference required that new material submitted for inclusion in *Singing the Faith* should be “gender inclusive in relation to people and offer balance of gender language in relation to God”. This requirement extends to Singing the Faith Plus.

In addition, we actively encourage hymns that explore varied-gender namings and imagery to describe God, as well as sensitive ways in which to speak about human relationships.

This subject is explored in detail in the [Inclusive Language and Imagery about God](#) report adopted by Methodist Conference in 1992. The report has been reaffirmed since, for example in the [Affirmed in the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit Module 5 \(Gender\)](#).

Words are appropriate theologically to Methodist beliefs and values

The Methodist people hold a broad spectrum of understandings about God and faith. This is reflected in worship and singing as elsewhere. Nevertheless, there are some emphases in Methodist doctrine which we endeavour to reflect in our hymnody. Helpful places to begin exploring these emphases are the short articles contained on our [What is distinctive about Methodism](#) page and in the brief summary of [Methodist doctrine](#).

All submissions considered by StF+ are assessed by a representative of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee, which is responsible for looking at all matters of Methodist doctrine.

Words and/or music reflects an aspect of contemporary human experiences

Our lived experiences are diverse. They are informed by, for example, family, faith experience, social background, culture and gender. We hope that submissions to StF+ will reflect the individuality of each writer/musician as well as the shared community of faith to which we belong.

We look for diversity in what we gather on StF+, not least the diversity we know to be present in our own local congregations. We hope that this diversity will be reflected both in our contributors and in their submissions. Further helpful resources can be found on our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) pages.

Language is contemporary and accessible

We encourage words that express our Christian faith and experience in language that is accessible to a contemporary audience.

We prefer it if writers avoid repeating phrases that have “aged” or even become clichéd. For example

- avoid “thee and thou”
- don’t rely on the language that hymn writers have used in past centuries
- experiment with your own metaphors
- think deeply about how you would express your ideas if you were in conversation with a friend or acquaintance who wasn’t familiar with “church language”

Meter is regular and the rhythmic stress consistent

Texts designed to be sung as verse hymns should be written (a) in a regular metre that fits existing tunes; or (b) in a regular metre to a new tune; or (c) in an irregular metre to a new tune.

“Regular metre” requires more than having the correct number of syllables per line. It also means having as many words as possible matching the strong and weak musical beats in a bar. Ask yourself:

- Do your words carry the same weight when sung as they would when you spoke them in everyday conversation? (Speak them out loud to check.)
- Is the weighting of syllables the same for each verse of your hymn? (Some variety in word stress is acceptable, but try to be as consistent as possible.)

For further information about Metre, see the Revd Ian Worsfold’s guide: [Hymn metre – how it works](#).

Text and/or music style complements material included in Singing the Faith and StF+

Psalm 96 encourages us to “sing a new song to God”; to embrace our faith, like God’s love, “new every morning”.

Some themes and concerns are well-represented in the published hymn book and on this website. Others are not. (For example, there are thematic gaps in our [List of all new hymns only on StF+](#).)

We don’t discourage hymns on subjects already addressed by other writers and musicians. The joys and concerns of the Old Testament psalmists are of course worth re-visiting in the 21st century. “Complementing” what has already been published may involve exploring a well-trod theme but with a fresh musical style or language.

However, also ask yourself:

- What is different about my hymn?
- What kind of society and world am I writing in, and for?
- How is it helpful to sing about this subject in this way and at this time?

Material has not been published elsewhere

We especially welcome hymns that have not already been published elsewhere, either online or in printed books and resources.

If your hymn has already published elsewhere, it is your responsibility to ensure that any copyright requirements are included with your submission, and that you can agree to this statement:

“All [hymns published on Singing the Faith Plus](#) are published on the understanding that they can be used freely by site-users, with any copyright information printed as appropriate. If an author or composer is listed with CCLI, the hymn should be used under regular reporting requirements.”

Should arrangements relating to your hymn change, it is your responsibility to let Singing the Faith Plus know of any adjustments that need to be made.

EVENT-SPECIFIC HYMNS

On StF+ we endeavour to publish new or recent material that not only complements the contents of Singing the Faith but also has enduring value. However, we recognise that hymns responding to a recent news event or topical subject are welcomed by many church members. (See Singing the Moment (1))

The editor will consider “event-specific” hymns for immediate publication and related publicity; they will then be considered by the StF hymn submissions group for longer-term inclusion on the website. Amongst other factors will be whether a hymn still has value without direct knowledge of its initial inspiration.