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Meet "FINN" in the Final Article Inside

And Did Those Feet in Ancient Time

Reverend Dr Noel Cox, Priest in Charge

On the second Sunday in Epiphany, we sang the hymn, "And did those feet in ancient time", also known as "Jerusalem". It comes from a well-known poem, written during the Napoleonic Wars, by the eccentric English poet and artist William Blake. Although the poem itself is over two hundred years old, its fame probably derives from the wonderful music by Sir Hubert Parry, to which it was set in 1916.

The original text of the poem is found in the preface Blake wrote for inclusion with *Milton, a Poem*,

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England's pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold:
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant Land.

The traditional understanding of the poem is that it refers to the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, who is also associated with the tradition of the Glastonbury Thorn. This stems from a thirteenth-century legend of Joseph of Arimathea. He had been driven from his

every year. A story about a baby, a mum, a dad, a journey, and visitors, stars, angels, and danger.

A story where an unmarried mother is a hero, where gifts are given by strangers of a strange religion, and songs of unrealistic hope are sung. A story where class divisions seem to collapse, where owning a house doesn't matter, and finding room for a needy family does.

Some very beautiful music has been written especially for this time of the year, This music is a language all of its own. It affects our mood in ways that words don't. It makes us receptive to wonder. It is a way the holy gets into the night.

There's even a Christmas song about a dog. Snoopy. Flying an aeroplane. You don't want to take too much of Christmas literally. For that song isn't really about a real dog in a real Sopwith Camel in a real dogfight. Instead, it's about the belief that there are things stronger and more powerful than hate and war. Things like friendship, honour, and humour. Things that depend on us making them happen.

And, lastly, there is food. Canine heart language. There are all sorts of Christmas food to enjoy. Rich puddings, stollen, and mince pies. Chicken, salads, and kaimoana. Turkey, ham and lamb.

As you get older you realise that the food is indeed a language. It is a language of hospitality that says although the physical pleasure of eating is good, the physical pleasure of seeing others having pleasure is even better. And somehow the smorgasbord of it all – good company, good food, good feelings – served alongside the belief that doing and being good can actually triumph over all that rails against it – is very, very good indeed.

And this, Finn, is Christmas.

A present is kind of like a sign that says, "I like you", or "I care about you". So, if the present is a box of chocolates, say, the chocolates are really a message saying you're cared for and liked. Not that dogs should know anything about chocolates, mind you.

Most people as they get older like the other kind of presents – the one ending with a "c" and an "e" at the end. As we get older, most of us prefer some companionship, rather than more stuff to stuff our lives with. In dog language – and this might sound very strange to you – as you get older it's not what or how much you eat that's important, but who you are eating it with.

Such presence is the next thing you need to know about Christmas.

You can't really do Christmas on your own. Christmas is a together thing. A together with a family. Or a together with friends. Or a together with those who have no family or friends. It is a time for doing things with others. Mostly little things. Like a smile and a chat. Little kindnesses.

Christmas is about a belief in community. It says that no matter how poor or rich or needy you are, you belong. It says that no matter how bad or good or weird you are, you belong. It says no matter what you believe about God or Santa or politics, you belong. There's enough room for everyone. There's enough love and goodness to include everyone.

But this of course depends on us. For we know people are left behind. People are discriminated against. Bad things happen. "Peace on Earth, goodwill to all" is up to us. Believing in Christmas is a commitment to making it happen.

Some of us like to go to Church at Christmas. There we are together with other people, and we sing and pray and ponder. Christmas is also a time for stories. The same story, actually. Told and re-told

home, following the crucifixion of Jesus, and began a journey of conversion. He travelled first to Marseilles and then in 63 AD, at the bidding of St Philip, landed in what is now the county of Somerset in south west England and arrived at Glastonbury, in an attempt to bring Christianity to the Britons. According to the legend he came bearing the Holy Grail, and accompanied by twelve disciples.

Blake does not name the walker on "England's green and pleasant land", but the clear inference is that it was Jesus himself, and not simply Joseph of Arimathea, to which Blake refers – "And was the holy Lamb of God, On England's pleasant pastures seen!" can mean nothing else. This is interesting because the legend that Our Lord accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to England on an earlier trip – when Jesus was a youth or young man – has usually been attributed to sources a century after Blake was writing. The building of the new Jerusalem was the establishment of Heaven on earth. That Joseph of Arimathea might visit Somerset was not especially remarkable, as he was a tin merchant. That Jesus Christ himself might have done so is much less probable.

After speculating whether the new Jerusalem might have briefly existed in his homeland, the theme of the poem changes, from "ancient time" to the present (at least Blake's present). It becomes the writer's goal to follow the lead of the Lord, and establish a new Jerusalem in both "England's green and pleasant Land" and "Among these dark Satanic Mills". The contrast between "England's green and pleasant Land" and "these dark Satanic Mills" – usually taken to mean the factories of the nascent Industrial Revolution, and their potential for the destruction of society and nature alike – is a stark one. Blake exhorts us to create an ideal society in our own land, inspired by the teaching of Christ, and to break down unjust and cruel ways.

He wants us to work to bring Heaven to earth, to make a difference now and not simply accept things as they are and hope for a better world when we die. Blake portrays this almost as a battle, with bows, arrows, spear and sword, and perhaps most gloriously, chariots. The line from the poem "Bring me my Chariot of fire!" draws on the story

of 2 Kings 2:11 (as well as 2 Kings 6:17), where the Old Testament prophet Elijah is taken directly to heaven:

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

The "mental fight" which Blake argues for is the fight of the heart, mind and soul, to love one another as Jesus has loved us. May we too fight as Blake exhorts us, to build Jerusalem in our green and pleasant land.

An Explanation (or, Some Musical Ramblings)

Tony Poole

At the Church of St Thomas, we are fortunate to have a fine organ, which has occasionally been used for major concerts and other similar works (e.g., when the world-renowned organist Douglas Mews recorded the only CD he made in New Zealand). We also have a brilliant voluntary organist, Reverend John Goodwin, to play our organ most Sundays. We are very lucky.

About once a month, John Goodwin cannot be present, because he has other commitments to do with his day-job.

When Reverend Mark Sullivan became our first priest-in-charge, he bought for our Church a set of 21 CDs of hymns and other religious songs, which his family played on the CD player and sound system when John was unable to be present.

Yes Finn, there is a Christmas – and Presence

This article was written by Reverend Glynn Cardy, Minister of St Luke's Presbyterian Church Remuera, formerly Vicar of St Matthew's Anglican Parish, Central Auckland, and published in the Auckland Herald at Christmas time 2021. It is worthy of another airing! It is published here with Glynn's permission. Note that it is written as if to his dog Finn; and note also the subtle use of the words "presents" and "presence".

Dear Finn

As an 8-month-old puppy, you are about to experience your first Christmas. You will notice things that are different. Like the big tree in the lounge that doesn't smell like a tree. It is festooned with figurines, tinsel, and twinkling lights. At night we turn the main lights off and the twinkles glow. It is called a Christmas tree, and it is not to be chewed.

The purpose of Christmas trees is that they have no purpose. They are just pretty. Beautiful. And beauty, like love, doesn't have to have a reason.

Christmas trees appeal to that part of us, that heart of us, that yearns to be transported away from our ordinary ways, away from work and worries, into an extraordinary imaginary fairyland. A place, where dreams are good even if they are not true, *but can come true* when goodness catches on.

What's underneath the Christmas tree is the next thing to know.

Hidden under the wrapping paper and ribbons are all sorts of nice things – like toys, books, food and little things we never knew we needed or wanted. They are presence, gifts for others.

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When Mark left for Christchurch, so did his family. I offered to take over the role hitherto filled by Mark's family, but suggested a slightly different system of using the CD player. Whereas Mark's family controlled the CD player using its *remote* control, I felt using the controls on the *CD player itself* would be more reliable. The CD player can take up to five CDs at once, loaded into five pockets on a revolving disc (probably called a "changer"). But, the design of the changer is such that CDs are not *locked into* their pockets, and one or more CDs can easily be dislodged when the changer is turned. I suggested we put all the hymns on only one CD, arranged in correct order and interspersed with prelude and postlude music, and any other incidental music, as required. Music could then be played during the whole service without any need to change the CD disc.

I knew how to make such a disc because I compiled similar discs during my time as a teacher of ballroom dancing. Ballroom dance music is sometimes referred to as "strict tempo" music, because each dance had its own set speed (i.e., tempo). For example, a waltz should be danced in $\frac{3}{4}$ time at 31 bars per minute (although some authorities say 30 bpm); while quickstep music is in $\frac{4}{4}$ time at between 48 and 52 bars per minute.

Most strict tempo music was composed many years ago, when ballroom dancing was more in vogue, and long-playing records were in use. Present-day CDs of strict-tempo dance music are largely transcripts off earlier long-playing records, remastered to improve the listenability of the music, rather than emphasise the tempo. The best source of strict tempo music in good condition in Auckland was (and still is) *Real Groovy*. I made up CDs of Waltz, Quickstep etc tunes, by copying the relevant tracks off second-hand long-playing records. Similarly, I copied into my computer the 21 CDs of hymns and other religious music bought by Mark Sullivan. Then in the week before each Sunday service when our organist is going to be away, I re-copy onto a new CD, and in the correct order, the four hymns,

and suitable prelude, postlude and incidental music for that Sunday. Computers these days have (or can easily have added to them) a suitable CD burner to do this inwards and outwards copying, and blank recordable CDs cost less than 50c each.

Before I make a new CD however, I do a certain amount of editing. The person who recorded the hymns in the first place (*Kevin Mayhew*), decided to play them on a good quality synthesiser rather than a pipe organ. I assume this was because it could be very hard to guarantee the quality of sound from a pipe organ, because the sound-waves must pass through the atmosphere inside a church, before being picked up by a microphone and recorded; whereas on a synthesiser the sound is entrapped in a shielded wire at all times.

As far as I can tell, only one verse of each hymn was in fact played by Kevin Mayhew; then that verse was reproduced several times to make up the whole hymn. Different pre-set tonal controls were applied to the verses before they were recorded, which means each verse in a recorded hymn sounds slightly different to the others, just as they do on a well-played organ.

If this means the volume on a verse is too loud or too soft, the CD operator is presumably supposed to adjust his/her volume control. But from where I sit, I can only hear about 25% of the sound from the speakers, because they are in front of me and point away, and I also suffer from some loss of hearing. So, I use an audio-editing programme on my computer, to ensure that all verses are at approximately the same volume, before I re-record them. Then I burn them onto a new CD, and spend some time at Church testing it, including going to the back of the Church to listen to it and note any further volume adjustment it will need during the service itself.

My CD recording programme is set to put a 2-second gap between tracks, unless I change it. It appears the same gap is set between each verse on Kevin Mayhew's hymns. This is about twice the gap

"I will comfort them and turn their tears to joy and they will remember you with happiness and be glad for your life among them."

So slowly Natalie began the journey to heaven and day by day drew nearer to God.

In the distance she could see light and hear music and feel happiness she had never known before, and as she moved towards the gates and into the household of God, she said to herself, with joy in her heart:
"That's good! That's very good!"

2. A little wry humour

Sally was driving home from one of her business trips in Arizona when she saw an elderly Navajo woman walking on the side of the road.

As the trip was a long and quiet one, she stopped the car and asked the Navajo woman if she would like a ride.

With a silent nod of thanks, the woman got into the car.

Resuming the journey, Sally tried in vain to make a bit of small talk with the Navajo woman. The old woman just sat silently, looking intently at everything she saw, studying every little detail, until she noticed a brown bag on the seat next to Sally.

"What in bag?" asked the old woman.

Sally looked down at the brown bag and said, "It's a bottle of wine. I got it for my husband."

The Navajo woman was silent for another moment or two. Then speaking with the quiet wisdom of an elder, she said:

"Good trade..."

And God said:
"I will give each of my people special gifts and I will help them to
use these gifts to make
my world the best it can be!"

And God looked down and smiled and said:
"That's good! That's very good!"

Now one of the people on God's earth was a child named Natalie
and God gave her the gift of music.

As she grew, she learned to use this gift in many ways and she gave
thanks that she could share it with others.

And Natalie had a family - a husband and children and grandchildren
too, and each one was special and she loved them all.

And God looked down and saw Natalie and smiled and said:
"That's good! That's very good!"

But one day Natalie began to realise that she was growing older and
that her body was beginning to wear out.

And she talked to God about it and asked for help.
God heard and said:

"My child, when I made the world and filled it with people, I had a
plan.

I wanted my people to have life for as long as they could,
but not forever because then my world would be too full with no
room for anybody.

I planned it so that when it was time to leave the earth, my people
would come and live
with me in heaven where there is no pain or sickness or sadness or
anything bad."

And Natalie said softly to God:

"Is my time to come and live with you getting near?"

And God said:

"Yes, but don't be afraid for I will always be with you and take care
of you."

And Natalie said to God:

"But I will miss my family and my friends, and they will miss me!"
And God said:

that John Goodwin leaves between verses when he is playing "live" hymns. I am sure it is one of the reasons why his playing seems "brighter". So, I use my editing programme to delete about half of the gap between the verses of the hymns before I re-record them.

I also have bought a few CDs from which I can copy prelude,
postlude and incidental music. However, much of this music comes
off old LPs. Many of these came from a garage sale held years ago
at Christ Church, Ellerslie, which included many religious records.
Other records came more recently from Real Groovy; and Stephanie
and I already had a collection of our own.

I have a long-playing record-player specifically designed to play
tracks into my computer; and my audio-editor programme is in
almost constant use editing tracks by Bach, Handel, Mozart,
Schubert, Bizet, Donizetti, Gounod, Bruckner, Bax, Finzi, Beethoven,
Chopin, Gibbons, Rossini, Vivaldi and da Bergamo, to name a
representative few; names I previously knew little or nothing about.

Among the things I have learned is the surprising number of ways in
which blemishes caused by wear and tear can be edited out of a
long-playing record's track, before it is re-recorded as a CD track.

For example, as many of you probably know, playing stereophonic
music through a computerised audio-editor causes two oscilloscope-
like tracks to appear on the computer screen, representing the left
and right tracks of the music.

These two tracks can be compressed down, so that the entire tune
can be seen on one screen; or, they can be extended out
horizontally almost indefinitely, so that only 2 or 3 seconds (or even
less) can be viewed at one time. A scratch on the track shows up
with a "signature"; for example, on a compressed oscilloscope line it
shows as an over-high straight vertical line, while on an extended
line a scratch may well have an upside-down tick at the top, pin-

pointing where the needle first hit and damaged the record. Both can generally (though not always) be removed, and the track appears to play again without damage. This is because the amount of track removed is so small, compared to the actual length of track played, that at full record speed our human ears cannot hear that a bit is missing. Thanks be to God, for **not** giving us bat-like hearing!

Another form of damage is caused by the design of the records themselves. Because they are circular and turn clockwise, the needle drags more heavily on the outside of each groove than the inside, thereby, over time, eroding the outside track. On the oscilloscope, this means the outside track is now smaller in depth than the inside track. The audio-editor has various ways of boosting either track independently, so the damage can be fully repaired.

The audio-editor also has a graphic equaliser function, which, without going into too much detail, means it can break down sounds into their component parts. This means, for example, that if I feel the bass sound is insufficient, either because it was recorded that way or because of subsequent use, the bass can be increased without affecting the treble or mid-tones; the track can then be re-recorded on a CD Disc, with its bass tones enhanced.

There are a number of other audio-editing techniques too, but that is probably enough to give some idea of how old records can be edited then re-recorded, to make hopefully reasonably pleasant prelude, postlude and incidental recorded music over the St Thomas sound system.

St Thomas's Church Music is not my only interest. I have a lot of second-hand secular music, both dance music and other music, that I get pleasure from improving and playing for my own amusement. For example, I am a great fan of the late Harry Secombe. I liked his humour, and I especially enjoy his music. He was a humble man and a Christian, whose brother was an Anglican priest. He also suffered

from ill health during much of his life. Several eminent voice coaches tried to persuade him to give up humour and concentrate on music, claiming he could become one of the best in England.

I have amassed many Harry Secombe records, of which over the past few months I have edited and re-recorded just under 100 tracks, with more still to come. This sort of thing does take a lot of time – but, like many parishioners, I'm old, in only moderate health, no longer agile, and can't do many of the things I used to do. So, editing music has become an important part of my life, including editing music for use in Church.

Two stories found while tidying up!

Supplied by Reverend John Goodwin

1. A Parable about Natalie

Once upon a time - long, long ago - everything was dark and had no shape or form.

And God looked around and said:

“I want to make a world.”

And so the world was made.

God made day and night and earth and sky and land and sea and trees and mountains and all sorts of creatures that could walk or run or swim or fly.

But something was missing and God sat down on a cloud to think.

“I know what my world needs!” God said, “People!”

So God created man and woman and gave them power to make more people and through the years the world became a busy place with all sorts of men and women and children everywhere!